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AMERICAN

METHODISM.

BY

REV. M. L. SCUDDER, D.D.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION BY REV. JOSEPH CUMMINGS, D.D., LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

ILLUSTRATED.

"A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE."

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INTRODUCTION.

THE close of the first century of the Methodist-Episcopal Church marks an important era in the history of the church at large.

As a result of the Centenary Celebration, the numbers and resources of the church, the greatness of her thank-offering for God's favor, including individual gifts rarely equalled, and collective contributions greater than were ever before given by single assemblies for any object, have awakened a general interest in her history, and an earnest inquiry relative to the causes and means of her success.

The origin of American Methodism was lowly, and its first agents were too humble to think of being the founders of a great church. They devised no extended system for the future, but sought to do good as they had opportunity, striving most earnestly to lead sinners to conversion and Christians to holiness.

The success of Methodism, so far as human instrumentalities are concerned, may be ascribed to the doctrines taught, and the providential character of the measures used, which were developed as circumstances required. At the time of its origin, the close connection between Church and State in some parts of the country had originated other than spiritual motives for a profession of religion, and there was a general decline in piety. Eminent men taught that regeneration was not a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper, nor an essential qualification for the Christian ministry. The great doctrines of the Bible were in many instances perverted, or so taught as to obscure others equally important.

Thus the great doctrine of God's sovereignty was so presented as to lead men to overlook human agency, and to cause a general apathy relative to personal responsibility. Methodism united the two doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's agency. It magnified the doctrine of grace, proclaiming that the atonement of Christ was made for all, and that it was the unchangeable purpose of God to save all who should believe on him. It declared that, relative to lost sinners, Christ watches for an opportunity to save, and waits to be gracious; and that God uses all the means that infinite wisdom, goodness, and power can devise, every hour, to save every man.

It made the doctrine of the utter worthlessness and helplessness of human nature a source of comfort. Since salvation is simply and only of grace, no good works as a prerequisite are required; and even compliance with the conditions of salvation, that are within the reach of all men, has no merit: the humblest may come with the same confidence as the highest to the throne of grace, and not hesitate to expect mercy. It impressed on every man a fearful sense of personal responsibility, when he was led to believe that God required and enabled him immediately to submit to his requirements, and enter his service. As the result of these principles, came the doctrine of assurance, and believers were led to receive a joyous confidence in God. As salvation is a present work, and is connected with no embarrassing contingency relative to future perseverance, the believer was led to expect the witness of the Holy Spirit to his acceptance with Christ, and to sing in joyous strains, —

> "How happy every child of grace,
> Who knows his sins forgiven! . .
> Exults my rising soul,
> Disburdened of her load;
> And swells unutterably full
> Of glory and of God."

The doctrines of the church impelled to personal activity. The believer was taught that he must continually obey God, and live by present faith, or he would cease to be a child of God. He must,

moreover, continually grow in grace, and before him was placed a high standard of Christian attainment. Having been justified by grace, through faith, he must seek to be wholly sanctified, and to have all the powers of his soul subject to the will of God. Thus the attainment of holiness was placed before the church, not as a mere possibility, but as a duty.

Moreover, the doctrines of a free, present salvation, of the freedom of the will, and of personal responsibility for influence exerted, led to earnest efforts for the salvation of others. Christians saw their friends, of their own will, subject to the wrath of God. As no stern decree bars the way to God's favor, and there is no need to wait for a gracious season, since every moment God does all that infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love can devise to save every soul; and inasmuch as, in consequence of the co-operation of the Holy Spirit with human agency, human sympathies, efforts, and prayers render more efficacious his warnings and pleadings, — a strong and often overwhelming sense of personal responsibility for the salvation of others came to the Christian. He felt that the warning given to Ezekiel as a watchman was directed to him, and trembled at the thought, that, on account of his silence, God at the day of judgment might require at his hands the blood of souls.

In its early days, the Methodist Church had many of the best characteristics of the churches of the present day. It sought to enforce practical principles, and gave no prominence to difficult, abstract, metaphysical propositions. It everywhere proclaimed the cross, and set forth the doctrine of the atonement as the most important. The only condition of membership it prescribed was a sincere, earnest desire to flee the wrath to come; but it, at the same time, presented a system of rules for its members, so simple, so strict, so broad, so comprehensive, that no one could obey them, and not become a consistent Christian. It has ever exhibited a kind, catholic spirit; and presented, as a basis of union among Christians, the doctrine of the cross, and a strict regard for the great principles of the gospel.

The measures adopted by the Methodist Church were also peculiarly well calculated to promote individual godliness, and secure a diffusion of its principles. In order to secure oversight and pastoral care in the absence of the preacher, the church was divided into small classes, and placed under the care of leaders of Christian experience and prudence, whose duty was to meet their classes weekly for their instruction, to encourage them to seek high attainments in a Christian life, and to report to the minister such as might walk disorderly. There were also bands, or small associations of Christians, pledged to promote each other's spiritual welfare. The public meetings of the societies, the quarterly meetings, the protracted meetings, and the camp-meetings, bringing a great number together, were well calculated, by the earnestness and the variety of their exercises, to awaken and continue religious interest, and give opportunity, not only for personal improvement, but for the acquisition of the power to communicate truth. The exercises of these meetings, and the responsibilities of the various subordinate offices of the church, gave an excellent practical training for the ministry.

If we consider Methodism as an aggressive system, there is displayed wonderful wisdom in its adaptation to the circumstances of the country and the age. A country so vast as ours, with a scattered population, ever extending to a rugged territory difficult of access, presents peculiar difficulties to all attempts to supply its spiritual wants. Methodist preachers traversed this wide extent of territory, and kept pace with the advancing wave of population, preaching the gospel wherever a few might be gathered, forming societies, which at stated times they visited and taught. The organization and plans of the church allowed a great variety of talent to be employed. The "circuits" were placed under the care of experienced ministers, and associated with them were the young and inexperienced, who, under their care, received careful training for their work. The "circuits" were arranged in "districts;" and their oversight was committed to men of greater wisdom and power, who presided over the Quarterly Confer-

ences, composed of representatives from all the societies. The Annual Conferences included the districts, and were composed of all the preachers who had passed the prescribed probation. Over these presided the bishops, who, with the assistance of the presiding elders, made the appointments of the preachers to their several fields of labor. Higher, and including all the Annual Conferences, was the General Conference; in which all the rules of the church were made, and plans formed for the extension of its power and usefulness. Thus unity and efficiency were secured to all the efforts of the church. It would be difficult, even now, to suggest any material changes which would secure a better adaptation of the church to the country as it was when Methodism was introduced.

The unity of the church, bringing into Christian sympathy men from different sections, and interchanging their labors, had a most powerful influence in preserving the unity of the nation. The division of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was justly considered as greatly weakening the bonds of union between the North and the South.

As the church for the people, rather than for the few, it is peculiarly adapted to this country. It enforces in its principles, and by its organization, the great doctrine of human equality, — one of the fundamental principles of a republican government. The history of the church strikingly shows these characteristics, and with what difficulty some customs involving them, but rendered unnecessary by changes in circumstances, have been discontinued.

One great source of the prosperity of the church has been its doctrine relative to the requisite qualifications of the ministry. The usage of the church has been to employ men of various grades of natural talent and preparatory training. It has recognized, as called to this work, all who give evidence of gifts, grace, and usefulness. From each class of society, as distinguished by degrees of intelligence and culture, men have been selected as ministers, who gave satisfactory evidence of piety and of good natural powers, but who were not so far removed from the sympa-

thies and habits of the people as to lose power over them. We think this is the true principle that should govern the church, in the rules prescribed for the education and training of ministers.

The organization of the Methodist Church, and the measures adopted, were eminently practical, and had direct reference to good and immediate results. The means adopted for the diffusion of literature and the sale of books were essentially the same as those which at the present day are found to be the most successful.

The doctrines of Methodism are to-day the same as at first, and its principles and modes of action are essentially unchanged. It has thus far succeeded, and has reason for rejoicing over its triumphs; but the important question arises, Will it continue to prosper, and will its success for the next century correspond to that of the century just closed? We are hopeful and confident relative to the future, and believe that the church will so modify her measures and policy, which have ever been providential, as to meet the present and future wants of society, and will thus go forth with increased strength to gain new victories for the cause of Christ.

The great work of the church of the future is to devise a plan that shall bring into systematic, earnest, and continued action the power of the membership of the church, in extending the kingdom of Christ. There is piety and power enough in the churches of to-day to spread the gospel through the land and the world. There is now a tendency to suppose that the customs of earlier years, whose circumstances were far different from the present, must still be followed. Hence, too much reliance is placed on the pulpit, and an unreasonable dissatisfaction is manifest with its efforts, and a demand made which it cannot meet. Action is wanted more than instruction. Christians must be made to feel that it is their duty constantly to engage in efforts for the conversion of sinners. Earnest meetings are frequently held in cities to consider what means shall be adopted to meet the spiritual wants of the ignorant, degraded multitudes that gather there. As a result, it is generally the case that one or two home missionaries are employed, who meet with but little encouragement, and are only feebly aided.

The true way to meet this want is for the church themselves to engage in the work. If all who are able and qualified should devote one-half of each Sabbath to organized, systematic, well-directed labor in the cause, what a change in the course of a single year would be produced!

We are persuaded that every successful church will engage directly and continuously in this work. The Methodist Church is peculiarly well calculated to take the lead in this direct and practical preaching of the gospel. Her past success, in a great degree, has been due to the fact, that, more than any other church, she has called into exercise the gifts of her members in the work of saving men.

In this commencement of the second century of her existence as a distinct church, all the power of her organization, all her enthusiasm, should be given to this cause. Thus will she go forward to greater success, and secure greater glory to the Saviour.

We may naturally expect that several new histories of the church will soon appear. The fact that authentic, able, and interesting histories have been published is no reason why others should not be written: no one book will reach all the members of so large a church. Each able writer, and each energetic publisher, will have a class of readers.

From an examination of the plan of the work prepared by Rev. M. L. Scudder, D.D., and our knowledge of its contents, we regard it as one of unusual value. The author is an able writer, well qualified for the work he has undertaken; and we have full confidence his history will be found to be able, instructive, and interesting. It will be presented in a compact volume, at a price so moderate as to be within the reach of all. It brings the history of the church down to the present time, including the events of the centenary year. It is fortunate that it is issued by publishers of so great energy, skill, and acquaintance with their business. We are confident that the merits of this work, thus published, will give it a wide circulation, and that it will accomplish much good.

JOSEPH CUMMINGS.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. Bishops of the Methodist-Episcopal Church (deceased), — John Wesley, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, William M'Kendree, Enoch George, Robert R. Roberts, Elijah Hedding, John Emory, Beverly Waugh.

2. Freeborn Garrettson.

3. Nathan Bangs, D.D.

4. Bishops of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, — Thomas A. Morris, Edmund S. Janes, Matthew Simpson, Levi Scott, Osmon C. Baker, Edward R. Ames, Edward Thomson, Davis W Clark, Calvin Kingsley.

5. Wilbur Fisk, D.D.

6. Peter Cartwright, D.D.

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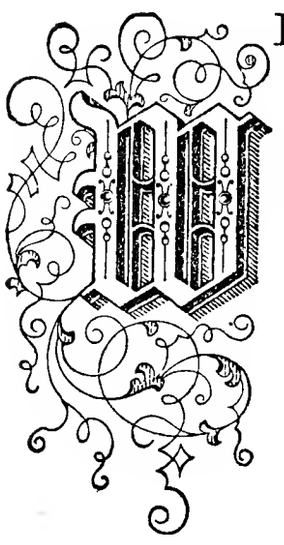
AMERICAN METHODISM.

CHAPTER I.

PRESENT STATE OF METHODISM.

"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation."



E intend to write about Methodism, chiefly American Methodism, and shall attempt to show whence it sprung, how it grew, and what have been its fruits. We shall find it originating in a new spiritual life given to John Wesley, in a little Moravian company in Aldersgate Street, London, and diffusing itself, and increasing, until it has become a wide-spread, evangelistic, and energetic Christian church, more numerous and potent than any Protestant agency in Christendom. We shall refer to facts, enough at least to show that it has had an eventful and wonderful history, and shall give enough of the lives of those who took part in founding and forming this ecclesiastical structure to prove that they were no mean men, in quality or in stature. We shall draw, from the strik-

ingly providential developments in the growth of Methodism, lessons that will teach us that the system was the product of a "divine economy," in which the voice of God is heard, and in the perfection of which the hand of God is seen.

The judgment that men will give respecting the past or the future of Methodism will depend on their opinions whether it is of man, or whether it is of God. The Jewish doctor of laws gave a wise decision, and one historically true, that whatever is of man will come to nought, and that whatever is of God must triumph. This is not superstition, but a rational, scriptural faith. It is also rational to expect that whatever is of God, when applied to religion more perhaps than to the ordinary affairs of life, will bear distinctive marks of the divine intervention; that, as it is developed, it will show his designing purpose and his controlling agency in the production of its instrumentalities and in its results. These are the signs that Methodism claims to give in proof that it is more than of man; that it is of God.

"Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." So reasoned the man that the Saviour healed of his blindness: the agency must be equal to the results. So we naturally reason, in determining what must be the quality and power of agencies from the results that they produce. By this method of reasoning, let it be decided whence Methodism has come.

In determining the matter by this process, we ask, first, for the *phenomena* of Methodism. Here we are met by some remarkable facts. We find that there are, in this year of grace 1867, a people throughout the

Protestant world, bearing the common name of Methodists, and having distinctive peculiarities of faith and practice; that they are numbered by millions, and are more numerous than any other Protestant sect; that this people have also more ministers and more churches, more missionaries, and converts in mission stations, more Sunday schools and Sunday-school scholars, more colleges and seminaries, and more students, are issuing more religious publications, and imparting more religious instruction to the public mind, making more proselytes, and having a greater influence on the religious movements of the age, than any other agency of Protestantism. These data form one class of facts. They may be called Methodistic results. There is another class. We find, that, no longer than one hundred and thirty years ago, this great people were no people, and that, when they began, their origin was very humble; that it was without any of the influence or prestige of social or civil power, and without the aid of wealth; that it began among the poor and illiterate, and generally gathered its numbers from the base and mean of the world. We find that this people were everywhere despised, opposed, and persecuted; but by their mode of religious teaching, their form of worship, and a professed divine influence attending them, they rapidly multiplied, and there was a radical change wrought in the lives of their converts, — from wickedness to godliness; that, notwithstanding all opposing influences, they increased in numbers, duplicating and reduplicating themselves, until they became what they now are. From a despised and persecuted people they have become respected and honored, with an unabating spirit and with increasing resources for propagandism through-

out the world. Could all these results have come to pass without the manifest intervention and direction of a superhuman agency ?

There is still another fact that will help us in deciding whether Methodism is of God. It is that its rapid growth, and attainment of influence, is without a parallel in the history of Christianity itself.

We are accustomed to suppose, and rightly too, that the growth of the Christian Church of the first century was very rapid. Every thing connected with its history confirms this supposition. The three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost; the inspired declaration that "multitudes were added to the church daily;" the zeal of the apostles and of the disciples scattered abroad, and preaching everywhere the Word; the evident success of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, throughout Asia Minor, and in every place whither he went, until he gathered proselytes from Cæsar's household,—all impress us with the belief that the word of God "grew mightily, and prevailed." And yet, though we have no exact statistics of the Christian Church of the first century, if we search the best historical evidence, both sacred and profane, we shall be compelled to admit, that, at the close of the first century and a quarter of its history, Christianity had not, at most, one-third the present number of Methodists among its adherents. When to this unexampled growth of Methodism we add its similarity in its origin, its spirit, and its fruits, to primitive Christianity, we shall not appear pretentious in claiming for it analogous evidence that it is the work of the divine hand.

But our knowledge of present Methodism will be very indefinite if we have learned no more than can be drawn

from these general statements of its rapid growth, and of its relative position with other Christian sects. We naturally ask for a more particular and definite account of its numerical and moral status; we inquire what are the different fields it now occupies, and to what extent and in what manner is it cultivating them.

Our first resort is to statistics. True, simple numbers are not infallible evidence of moral power. They are only proof of some efficient instrumentality, good or bad, in producing them. But when numbers are united with other evidence, as that they have been gathered by agencies that were influenced by the purest motives, that they have been increased against most inveterate opposition, and especially if it is plain that their subjects have shown a decidedly radical moral improvement in their characters, then numbers become an incontestable evidence of strength, and are good ground for confidence in their future continuance and increase. We find all these conditions fulfilled in respect to the statistics of Methodism, and therefore claim for them great weight in determining its true quality, and its right to receive the confidence and respect of the world.

We naturally ask, What is Methodism in the land where John Wesley, its founder, lived and worked and died? For fifty years he devoted his entire personal ministry to England, Scotland, and Ireland. Over these he was continually passing and repassing, preaching, supervising his societies, and giving direction to the formation and development of Methodism. There is hardly a shire or town or village that was not at some time visited by him in person. The success that attended him and his immediate co-laborers was not temporary. Every year added to Methodism in Great Britain,

both in numbers, moral position, and resources; and it now counts, in its various branches, more than *eight hundred thousand members.* The larger part of these are known as Wesleyan Methodists. The remainder are found in the Primitive Methodists, United Free Methodists, Bible Christians, New Connection, and Reformed Union Methodists, all of which hold to the doctrines, profess the experience, and call themselves the followers, of Wesley. These hundreds of thousands are ministered to by more than ten thousand preachers, itinerant and local,—men who for general intelligence, zeal in God's service, and purity of character, will not suffer by a comparison with the same number of ministers in any other branch of the Christian Church. The Methodistic communities of Great Britain are provided with not less than *five thousand* chapels, located in every part of the kingdom, some of which are very large, and capable of accommodating from three to four thousand persons. Every sabbath these chapels are opened, and the sons of Wesley preach there his old favorite themes, —"a free, a present, and a full salvation."

In these chapels, or in other convenient places, the Methodism of Great Britain has over *eight thousand* Sunday schools, attended by *six hundred thousand* scholars, taught by nearly *one hundred thousand* faithful and godly teachers. Methodism has always been a zealous advocate for the religious education of the young. Wesley, though a very old man at the introduction of Sunday schools, cordially approved them, and seemed to have a prophetic vision of the great influence they were soon to have in the church. A Wesleyan woman was an important assistant of Robert Raikes in first founding them in Gloucester. With such a system of religious

instruction, including all its appliances, catechetical and textual, and with a periodical and volume literature adapted to the taste and culture of the young, more extensive than any similar agency in the kingdom, what a controlling and sanctifying influence must be exerted by these schools on the formative mind and heart of the nation!

John Wesley was the great pioneer in the diffusion of a cheap religious literature among the people. He prepared it for the press, printed it, and taught his preachers how to distribute it. He insisted that they should "leave no stone unturned" in scattering the printed truth. He did more than any other man in England to popularize general reading among the masses. His earlier adherents came mostly from a class who were not familiar with books; but he and his itinerants encouraged them to cultivate a taste for reading, and furnished them with the material, especially with works "tending to godliness." His successors have followed in his track. The Methodistic literature of Great Britain is classical, pure, and attractive. While its ministers are speaking from the pulpit and class-room, the Methodist press is giving a broadcast distribution to a sound religious, inspiring and conserving literature. Go where you may into any dwelling of Methodists throughout the kingdom, be it ever so mean or humble, and you will find this literature; and the occupants, prompted by their religion, have been taught to read and to appreciate it.

But the most noticeable feature of British Methodism is its missionary spirit, and its organized, effective missionary work. It takes the lead of all other churches in missionary movements. From its origin, Methodism has been characterized for its zeal in propagandism. It

has always been essentially missionary. But, for many years, the direction of its efforts was almost exclusively to the home population. After the death of Wesley, the grand idea of foreign evangelization began to possess the minds of his followers. Providence opened the way for its development. The great Wesleyan Missionary Society was formed, and thenceforth the noblest phase of Wesleyan Methodism was its missionary work. It has so permeated all the societies, and taken such systematic form, that every child and adult, every church and individual, under the influence of Methodism in Great Britain, contributes regularly to its funds. The receipts of this society are now about a *million and a half* dollars, annually. It has an aggregate of more than *five hundred* missionary circuits, and nearly *two thousand* salaried missionary laborers, of whom about *eight hundred* are regular preachers. It has over *one hundred and fifty thousand* communicants on its mission stations, nearly *four thousand* chapels and preaching places, and about *one hundred and twenty-five thousand* children under its instruction. A people who can sustain such a working force abroad, and continually increase its resources for doing it, must have a vitality and energy at home, and be itself thoroughly infused with the spirit and activity of Christianity. We do "not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles."

But the effect of such vast missionary efforts has not been confined to its direct objects abroad. "He that watereth hath himself been watered." The reflex influence has been to stimulate and increase the piety of Methodism in the British Isles. And, still more, it has imparted an almost rival spirit for evangelical propagandism in all the various sects of the realm.

The present moral power of Methodism in Great Britain may not be reckoned by statistics; that this power is great, is a fact "known and read of all men." Methodism deals with the masses of the people, educating, reforming, elevating, and conserving them. The masses of Great Britain are to-day the agencies that are popularizing the thought and habits and government of the kingdom. No hasty attempt can be made to subvert order, or produce anarchy, but Methodism stands ready with an arresting power to prevent it. All the great moral reforms that have given to England a deserved pre-eminence among the nations, from the movements for the destruction of slavery to every measure to improve or alleviate the condition of the home population, have been largely aided by the co-operation and support of Wesleyan Methodism.

That which is most of all its praise and its glory, English Methodism continues to cultivate and cherish the primitive spirituality and religious experience of its founder. While girding itself to send abroad the word of life to all people, it keeps and feeds the pure fire of devotion upon its domestic altars. It keeps steadily at the original work of saving souls. The same gospel ring is heard every sabbath in its five thousand chapels, that characterized Wesley's first sermon on Hannam Mount, Kingswood; the same religious experience, of a divine assurance of an inward salvation, that Wesley first found to be his, in Aldersgate Street, London, in 1739, is still told in thousands of weekly class-meetings. There is the same heavenly psalmody, sung by hundreds and thousands together, attesting to the heart worship of its offerers, that was heard in the old foundry of Moorfields a century and a quarter ago. There is now

seen the same transforming power of the truth in the many converts of Methodism, the same spirit of revival, the same joyful Christian fellowship, that characterized the fruits of Nelson's labors in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, in Newcastle and Leeds. Such is Methodism, and the influence it is exerting on Great Britain, at the present day.

What is Methodism on the American continent? The answer to this will embrace facts that show their importance and interest to the statesman, the moralist, the philosopher, the patriot, and the Christian. No impartial history can be written of the American people for the last century without recounting much of the developing agencies of Methodism. The evangelical movement under this name, that so reformed the relious character of Great Britain, has repeated its work, on a larger scale, on American soil. The branch that grew out of the parent stock has rivalled its original in strength and fruitfulness.

The centenary jubilee of American Methodism has just been held. Its various services have told us, in part, what Methodism is. They have uttered their testimony in the large and numerous gatherings of the people throughout the cities and towns and villages of the land. Its disciples have expressed, in these assemblies, their love for the Methodistic spirit, their gratitude for its fruits in themselves, and their faith in its future success. In the gladness of their hearts they have said to each other, "Come, let us sing unto the Lord a new song." It has rung through the valleys, and sounded along the hillsides; the cities have caught the strain, and shouted it back to the prairies; from the Atlantic to the Pacific, sweeping over the

lakes and by the river courses, has been heard the glad anthem, "Come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation; let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with psalms. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." No such celebration of religious successes has ever been made in this or any other country,— so universal, so harmonious, and so inspiriting.

This great jubilee has given an opportunity to say in another way what Methodism is. While those not immediately engaged in its services, or others who were ignorant of the economy, the history, the statistics, and the mind of Methodism, have inquired, "What of this people?" the centenary festival has afforded a proper occasion for its friends to respond to the inquiry, and to instruct the uninformed.

The pulpit, the platform, and the press have spoken out plainly and emphatically, and rehearsed the wonderful phases of Methodist history. They have told of its influence in forming the character, and in securing the prosperity, of the American nation; how it has inspired the energy, and given direction and balance to the efforts, and touched with beauty the individual or corporate labors, that have made, and will make, the people opulent in their greatness. They have recounted the multitudes that have been brought by Methodism from the ways of sin to the profession and practice of godliness. Not in boasting, but with honest truth, they have spoken of its superior numbers, its efficient polity, and its ascendency in influence over the other religious denominations of the land; and they have urged these

as reasons for its great responsibility, and their expectations of its future usefulness.

Again, the centenary year has told us what American Methodism is in the great and grand commemorative enterprises it has projected. Gratitude is both demonstrative and monumental. While the people have been responding to the promptings of a thankful heart in songs of praise and mutual congratulations for what Methodism has done for them, they have been devising "liberal things" to tell to posterity that their gratitude was "not in word only, but in deed and in truth." How noble and liberal have been the material offerings of this jubilee year! How vast the plans for church extension! How grand the schemes for the promotion of education! How generous the *millions* of dollars, voluntarily offered, to further these plans, and accomplish these schemes, that the heart has devised! Yet they have all been responsive to show what Methodism is, and have assured us what is its intelligence and spirit, what its strength and resources, what its principles and piety.

One hundred years ago, Philip Embury preached the first sermon of a follower of Wesley in the Western World. It was addressed to an extemporized audience of four persons, — poor emigrants of the Emerald Isle, in a humble, retired dwelling in the future metropolis of the country. The preacher and hearers were without social or monetary influence in the land of their adoption. His preaching was only the untrained teaching of a working layman of an unknown sect, without position, without ecclesiastical organization, and without recognition by the churches of the land. The witnesses among the people, at that time, to a pure

evangelical piety, were very few; and their testimony to its renewing power was, at best, hesitating and equivocal. The corruptions of society, the bigotry and formalism, and not unfrequently the scepticism, of what professed to be Christianity, presented to the lone Wesleyan a very unpromising field for cultivation. What was his success? What has a century wrought?

The statistics of American Methodism, at the present time, are worthy the study of every one who desires to understand the philosophy of the development and progress of Christianity in the world. Let us examine them.

It is proper to say that the American Methodistic family is divided into several branches. The Methodist-Episcopal Church, out of which all the others have grown, is more numerous than all the rest. This family is not, like most of the other religious sects of the country, chiefly confined to some particular locality, but spread out, in nearly equal proportions, into every part of the United States, and of the colonies of Great Britain. Its members are found dwelling in the borean regions of Labrador and Newfoundland, scattered in goodly numbers through the Canadas, and a majority sect in all the older settled parts of this country, — in the Atlantic and Gulf States; they are giving a forming religious quality to the new Western States; they are delving in the rich mines of the mountainous territories, and have helped to construct the great and growing States of the Pacific coast. They are a homogeneous element, diffused through all the population speaking the English tongue on the American soil. Though differing in its various branches in respect to some phases of governmental policy, this Methodistic family is essentially one church, holding to the doctrines of Wesley, preaching in his

style, and adopting his general rules as its ecclesiastical and constitutional bond.

In round numbers, this great church has over *two million* communicants: their increase during the year 1866 was over *one hundred thousand.* It has not less than *eight millions* of persons attendant on its ministry, and receiving their religious instruction from its teachings. More than *one-fifth* of the whole American population attend the Methodist ministry. Over *fifty thousand* sermons, uttering the simple, earnest, evangelical truths of the gospel, are delivered by Methodist preachers on every sabbath of the year, from Nova Scotia to the Rio Grande, from the Eastern to the Western Ocean. This Methodistic body have more than *twenty thousand* church edifices, some of them of great capacity and inviting structure, into which at least *four millions* of the people assemble weekly to listen to the word of life.

Such are the aggregate numbers of Methodism, in respect to its ministry, its membership, its attendants, and its churches. The larger part of these are connected with the Methodist-Episcopal Church. The remaining part are identified with the Methodist-Episcopal Church South, the Protestant Methodists, the Evangelical Association, the Wesleyan Methodists, the Free Methodists, the Primitive Methodists, the African Methodists, and the Zion's Methodist-Episcopal Church, in the United States; and the Wesleyan Methodists, the Methodist-Episcopal Church, the New Connection, and the Primitive Methodists, in Canada; and the Wesleyan Connection, in Eastern British America.

Another important phase of statistical Methodism is the exhibit it gives of relative increase in the different decades for the last eighty years, or since the indepen-

dent organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. And especially is it important, in comparing this increase with the increase of the population of the country during that time. This exhibit appears the more remarkable, when we take into the account that America has been the resort of emigrants from the Old World, and that its increase by millions, through emigration, has been chiefly by those of the Romish faith. Notwithstanding this, the ratio of increase of Methodism, for these several decades, has averaged to the increase of population as *nine* to *six*.

These statistics are of value in comparing the present number of Methodists with the number in the various communions of the other evangelical churches of the country. In making this comparison, we must not forget that all the larger denominations had a long start of the Methodist in the race of progress. They were each an "establishment" when Methodism began. Taking the best tables furnished us of the numbers in all the other Protestant sects, the aggregate of Methodism to all these is as *two* to *five*, and its ratio of increase is as *two* to *one*.

We pass now from the statistics of simple numbers to what may be called the statistics of Methodistic efforts. We take the Methodist-Episcopal Church as our data, because it is the most prominent, most systematic, and the best reported, of any branch of the Methodist family.

We ask, first, What is its position as a missionary church? It is not half a century since its first distinctive missionary organization. Why it was not formed before is easily understood: the whole church organization was a missionary structure. The field before it required its development in a regular itinerant propa-

gandism through the new and widely extending country. The time was not yet for a separate and exclusively missionary effort. The domestic work demanded all its resources of men and money. In 1819, the Missionary Society of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was formed. Its receipts the first year were *eight hundred and twenty-three* dollars. Its estimated receipts for the year 1867 are *one million* dollars. It began, and for some years directed its efforts, to evangelize the Indian tribes of North America. It has now become a grand organization, domestic and foreign, contemplating the evangelization of the world. It has missionaries in its foreign fields; in China, India, Africa, Bulgaria, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and South America. It is but a few years since the most of these became mission stations; yet the society has in these countries *one hundred and sixty* missionaries, and over *seven thousand* church members. The efforts of this society, itself almost a component part of the church, are given largely to domestic missions. The demands of the country, with a great foreign population, and the large number of new settlements, require it. There are nearly *a thousand* missionaries in this home field; and over *one hundred thousand* communicants in these domestic missions, more than *thirty thousand* of them speaking a foreign, chiefly the German, language.

In America, as in Great Britain, the missionary work of Methodism is not wholly computed by its direct results on the objects on whom it is bestowed. It promotes the spiritual health of all the Methodistic communities. The idea of laboring to save the world has given enlarged views, and produced correspondingly liberal schemes, in the other religious enterprises of the church.

The praying mind, that has sought God's blessings on others, has found its petitions re-acting in blessings on itself. The missionary spirit, that is essentially the spirit of Christ, has imparted to Methodism more of his self-denial, his charity, and his zeal; and the missionary phase of Methodism has proved, like vigorous exercise to the body, an increase of its strength, its health, and its beauty.

Methodism is the most active and extensive ecclesiastical educator on this continent. This it does in other ways than by its teachings from the pulpit. It is foremost in its direct efforts to impart religious instruction to the young, in establishing institutions of superior grade to promote general education, and in the diffusion of a healthy and attractive literature.

It has always given much attention to the religious instruction of the young. In its first discipline, in answer to the question, "What shall we do for the rising generation?" it gave directions how the preachers were to "meet the children weekly;" how "prepare instructions for them," and "to talk with them at home." Asbury, the apostolic bishop, was the first in this country to establish a Sunday school. The denomination has been among the most zealous supporters of this nursery of the church. The Methodist-Episcopal Church alone has nearly *fourteen thousand* Sunday schools, with more than *a million* of scholars, and over *one hundred and fifty thousand* teachers. Much of the growth of the church may be attributed to this powerful agency. Over *twenty-five thousand* converts were reported the last year, through its instrumentality. The influence of these "Bible schools" on the intelligence and piety of the whole church cannot be told in numbers. Its reacting

effect on the evangelical spirit and zeal of the teachers, real "lay pastors," must be very great.

American Methodism is a vigorous laborer for general education. The Wesleys were educated men, and sought, from the commencement of Methodism, to found schools and to encourage learning. Its mission, however, for many years, seemed to be more exclusively evangelical; yet one of the first movements of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was to found a college. It was burned down, and, after being rebuilt, was burned again. This seemed to be the voice of Providence, that the time had not come for the church to devote its energies to general education. A sentiment adverse to any efforts in this direction prevailed for a quarter of a century. But the work could not be longer delayed. Many of the leading minds of the church saw its importance, and engaged in it. Seminary after seminary was established, college after college was founded; and now Methodism is the greatest ecclesiastical patron of such institutions in the country. It has *thirty-five* colleges, and *one hundred and forty* academies, with nearly *a thousand* instructors, and about *thirty thousand* students. The contributions of the centenary year will add, at least, *three millions* of dollars to the endowments of these institutions, and give them new and unprecedented vigor. The influence of such extensive educational provisions on the intellectual, as well as moral and social, character of the nation can hardly be estimated.

The press has been another educator in the hands of Methodism. We have already referred to the efforts of Wesley to make the press turn preacher. It was natural that his followers in America should do the same thing; not because they were simple imitators, but because they

saw it was a good way to do their work, and spread scriptural holiness over the land. Almost immediately after the organization of the church, they initiated a plan for printing and circulating books. The connectional economy of the church provided great facilities for making the plan successful. By it, a literature has been given the country that has essentially aided in educating the people in the doctrines of Methodism, and making the church homogeneous in creed and government. This "book concern" of the Methodist-Episcopal Church has become a great American institution, — the largest of any religious publishing-house in the world. It issues more than *two thousand* different kinds of printed volumes, and over *a thousand* varieties of tracts, in the English and other languages. Its periodicals — quarterly, monthly, semi-monthly, and weekly — have a greater extent of circulation than any similar publications in the nation. Its great capital, and able corps of agents, editors, and clerks, with its facility of distribution through the preachers, make it a mighty denominational agency to form and to encourage the taste for instructive reading among the masses of the people. Dr. Stevens says, "If Methodism had made no other contribution to the progress of knowledge and civilization in the New World than that of this powerful institution, this alone would suffice to vindicate its claim to the respect of the enlightened world."

Passing from these great enterprises, its grand missionary scheme, and its extensive agencies of education, the influence of which can only be partly computed by numbers, we notice other important elements of power in American Methodism.

The American people have been distinguished for

their material, social, and civil progress. Methodism has taken a prominent part in this work of progress. It is a fact, to which history furnishes no exception, that the condition of the State, the quality of social life, and the standard of morals, of any people, are mainly determined by the characteristics of its religion. In respect to its influence on these, Methodism has a good record. The great moral enterprises that have so distinguished the present century have found in Methodism, either a leader or a firm supporter. The Methodist-Episcopal Church has been foremost in its loyal and patriotic support of a free government, and of equal rights to all. It has had a decided and outspeaking voice against every kind of immorality. It has wrought vigorously to elevate and sanctify the domestic relations of life.

It is the glory of Methodism that it takes hold of the masses of the people, not excepting the lowest grades of society; and whomsoever it reaches, it elevates by its religious and educational instrumentalities to a higher plane of respectability and power. Not many of the great and noble have been brought into its communion; but it has the greater honor of having made them out of its members. It has furnished men to occupy the high places of executive trust in the General and State governments. It has given some of the most enlightened jurists of the nation. The national and local legislatures have been well represented by the followers of Wesley. The learned professions have been honored by Methodists.

But it is not in these men that Methodism has its greatest honor, nor by whom it is doing the greatest good. Its mission is to the many, and its efforts are chiefly to improve the rank and condition of the "com-

mon people." Among these it finds the great producing power of the wealth of the nation. It increases this wealth, and gives it an equality of distribution, by making its subjects sober, provident, and frugal. Its converts are found in all the departments where genius, industry, and honest labor find a remunerative reward. It does indeed find few *millionnaires*, but it makes many. With such a general diffusion of material resources, and tending to increase them, among *two millions* of communicants and *eight millions* of adherents, and in a country where the caste of eminent wealth is but partially felt, it cannot be a doubtful problem, what is the improving agency of Methodism on all the industrial enterprises of the nation.

All these influences of Methodism to which we have referred, are only its concomitant blessings, — its collateral results. Its great glory is in its direct and successful efforts to lead men from the practice of sin to the knowledge of God. Its work is to "save sinners." Its other benefits flow from this. It begins legitimately to "make the tree good that its fruit may be good also." Does it retain its primitive efficiency in doing this? Has it the same adaptive, inventive, and active evangelical spirit of the fathers? Are the Methodistic communities as devout and spiritual-minded? Are its ministers as zealous and holy? and are they as direct in their preaching? Are the lives of Methodists as God-fearing and consistent? Is Methodism itself as aggressive on the ranks of the ungodly and wicked, and as earnest in turning them to Christ, as it was in former times? Croakers and grumblers abound in all ages, and there may be some who would give a negative answer to these questions. It may be difficult to furnish affirmative proof to

them in a single sentence. Our response, in brief, shall be, look at the revivals of religion under Methodistic auspices, that continue to prevail in all parts of the land; and look at the increase of more than *one hundred thousand* converts in the Methodist-Episcopal Church, during the last year, — by far the largest annual increase of members, with one exception, since the church was formed.

What a change has been wrought in a century! Embury's first sermon to four hearers was in a private room. How soon that room became too small for the company that assembled to hear! How soon the more commodious "rigging-loft" proved too strait for the crowd! How soon the faith and zeal of the saints had laid the foundations of their first church, and from it sounded out the word of the Lord to all the inhabitants of the land! "Who shall count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion." That mother church has multiplied itself till the same songs that echoed from its walls are repeated in twenty thousand churches from the arctic to the tropic zones. The successors of that first lay preacher on American soil minister at their altars, and proclaim the same "free, present, and full salvation." The little class that he formed of four members has over *fifty thousand* duplicates which act as social guardians of spiritual life, to keep alive the religious fire in the hearts of two millions of devout Christians. The bigotry, formalism, and scepticism of the churches then existing, with which he had to contend, have given place to the truths of the itinerant's message; and these churches

have been permeated and invigorated by a measure of his spiritual power. The intrepid evangelist of Methodism has proved himself equal to every demand on his ministry. He has entered every open door, and gathered into his Master's garner from every ripening field. He has gone out with the countless emigrations, and in the rude cabin of the pioneer, or to the rustic assemblage of the settlers on the prairies, has spoken words that infused a Christian quality in the developing civilization of the great Western States. He has found out the abodes of poverty and depravity in the full city, and, through the word of the Lord, lifted up their wretched victims to a state of comfort and purity. Wherever wickedness has consorted, in high places and in low, his warning voice has been heard, crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways!" He has set his face, like a flint, against every form of social and confederate crimes, and become a leader in reforms from national sins. He has lifted up the cross of Christ in every place and to every class, as the remedy for every woe, and declared it to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Hundreds of thousands have received the truth from his lips, and are now reaping its fruition in an endless life; and millions more are now living witnesses to their fellow-men of its renewing and saving energy.

The formation of that little class was only initiative and experimental. What will come of it? said every one of its members. An ecclesiastical establishment has grown from it, with an irrepressible spirit of propagandism, and with ever-increasing means for conquests for Christ throughout the world. All that composed that class were poor: they cried to the motherland, "Come over

and help us." Their successors, through the profitableness of godliness, are now rich in this world's goods, and are in turn sending out missionaries to every clime. The walls of that first church were built by contributions, chiefly from those without its own communion. Now, from its own resources, Methodism is dedicating to God's worship a new church on every day of the year. There were then no specially organized efforts to save the young, — the day of sabbath schools had not dawned. Now a *million and a half* of children, instructed each sabbath in the truths of Christianity, and becoming the subjects of its power, are making the sabbaths and the temples vocal with the praises of the Most High. Then the country was only sparsely settled, and the dwellers, in provinces, were only along the Atlantic Coast. Now the provinces have become a great nation, reaching from sea to sea, and with a domain and wealth greater than empires: but Methodism has "lengthened its cords and strengthened its stakes," co-extensive with the vastly spreading State; and multiplied its converts with a greater ratio than the rapidly increasing population; and, by its bold and vigilant evangelism, has moulded the character, and given prosperity and order to the institutions and the energies, of the leading nation of the world. From this view of what Methodism now is, we naturally turn to inquire what was the great vital force that produced it, — what was its origin.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRUE ORIGIN AND VITAL FORCE OF METHODISM.

"For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."

THE beginning of Methodism was attended with some remarkable phenomena. Three men, without any apparent distinction except that which attaches to every priest of the Established Church, began at the same time to preach in the churches of England, and in the open air where the churches were denied them. Their ministrations were soon extended to all parts of England, Wales, and Ireland. Extraordinary numbers, such as attend no other preachers, congregated to hear them. Many of their hearers became intensely interested in what they taught, and were extraordinarily affected by it. Their influence on the communities was very diverse. Some who had hitherto professed to be religious disavowed the worth of their former professions, and declared that they had found a "better way." Thousands who had lived in gross wickedness gave themselves to devout praying and godly living. Many others were instigated, with almost fiendish hatred, to persecute with violence, and in various ways, these new preachers and their converts. The learned, generally affecting to despise the itinerants

and their work, nevertheless wondered at their success, and speculated concerning it. Most of the members of the existing churches were aroused to astonishment by what they saw, and, with various views, were in doubt respecting the character of the new movement. The excitement continued, and all parts of the kingdom were similarly affected. The multitudes of adherents to the new preachers, and multitudes who were not adherents, confessed that their preaching produced a great and radical improvement in the manners and lives of all who received it. Such was the beginning of Methodism.

What made these phenomena more wonderful was that these preachers did not teach new, but old truths. Their *theology* was the same that had been professed by the churches, and incorporated into the creeds and catechisms of the churches, for two centuries. Yet no such results as they produced, in kind or degree, had been produced by the preaching of the established and existing clergy.

If we can ascertain what it was that made this difference between the old and new preachers, and between the effects of their preaching, we shall probably be able to determine what was the *true origin of Methodism.*

We think we shall find this difference to be, that the Wesleys and Whitefield were *inspired* to preach as they did by a divine renewing power upon their own hearts; and that the existing clergy, wanting this experience of "power," lacked also this inspiration. The secret of the marvellous success of the itinerants is revealed in that they insisted that the same divine renewing power that they felt was essential to, and the privilege of, all men, even of the worst, and that, without it, men were not

Christians, but the children of wrath and condemnation. But this doctrine, either its truth or its importance, was not so taught by the existing clergy. The utterance of a truth that brought God consciously nigh to the people, and was confirmed with the assurance of its certainty by the testimony of those who had proved it, with the offer of the knowledge of its supernatural reality to all who would repent and believe in Christ, and enforced by the Spirit of God on the hearts of the people, was the true cause, or real philosophy, of the results that followed. The preaching was indeed new, for the people had not been so taught; but it met the conscious want of the soul,— it was a religion to be "felt and seen." It revealed to men, first, a sense of the terrible reality that they were far from *God* in their sins; but it next awakened in them an earnest desire to be brought nigh to him, and made them cry out, "What must we do to be saved?"

When John Wesley, speaking of his own conversion, said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt an assurance that Christ did take away my sins," he was only stating an experience that was to fit him, and every successor of his, to preach the gospel with "the demonstration of the Spirit and with power." He was only stating an experience that must be enjoyed, and is radically necessary, in order to be a Methodist.

Whoever fails to appreciate the fact, that Methodism is a religion of *sanctification*, that it is more than a mere educator of truths scripturally orthodox, or of forms scripturally consistent; whoever fails to see that it is more than an organization well adapted to preserve and extend a system of faith, — will fail to apprehend what is its chief excellence, its vital force, — that it is Christ in

man; and will fail also to account for its origin, its growth, and its efficiency in the world. And, furthermore, he will fail to see what it is that gives to Methodism much of its distinction in comparison or in contrast with the other ecclesiastical systems of Christendom.

A careful student of church history will easily perceive that every ecclesiastical organization has grown up, and become what it is, by the influence of some peculiar fundamental dogma, referring either to doctrine, experience, or practice. They may each hold some opinions common to most of the others; but there will be found in each some distinctive peremptory truth, that has given to it what may be called its characteristic quality, and that has had a conforming influence on all its features, whether of doctrine or practice. The merits of a church, and its capability to grow and to be permanent, must be judged by the truth or falseness, the strength or weakness, of this characteristic and ruling dogma. The life-power of the Romish Church, for instance, is in the asserted authority of the priest, "to bind and to loose." Romanism teaches an implicit reliance on the efficacy of a priestly hierarchy. Hence it makes but little account of the state of the hearts of its subjects. Calvinistic churches are established on, and take their complexion from, the doctrine of the "absolute sovereignty of God;" which, eliminated, is the election to assured salvation of an unalterable number, limited and fixed before the foundation of the world, and the predestination or permission of all others, unredeemed, to perish in their inborn depravity. Though admitting the importance of a renewed nature to enter on eternal life, the doctrine of "sovereignty" gives to none, for the present, an assurance of eternal

salvation. Lutheran churches, as they at present exist, are built on the fundamental dogma of the efficacy of the means of grace, and of justification by faith in them. While they admit the possible work of regeneration by this faith, they virtually deny the essential condition of sanctification as a qualification for present acceptance with God. The Episcopal Church, divided into High and Low Church sections, tends in one to the Romish side, and in the other to the Calvinistic or Lutheran side, and in neither one makes it important to be renewed in heart by the Spirit, to have a true Christian character.

The one controlling doctrine that gives distinctiveness to Methodism is, that the work of salvation by Christ depends on the enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying inworkings of the Holy Spirit; and hence, that the individual is saved, and saved only, as he becomes the subject of this work of the Spirit. In connection with this, it teaches also, that the atonement of Christ hath provided that every man may receive this Spirit, and become the subject of its sanctification.

Romanism asserts that sin can only be destroyed by the fires of purgatory. Calvinism and Lutheranism teach that it remains in the believer till death. Methodism asserts that the grace of Christ can "sanctify wholly," "here and now."

These distinctive doctrines that we have ascribed to Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Wesleyanism are not only true in their application to the churches that take their tenets from the men who give them names, but they can each be directly traced to the personal experience of the great Reformers themselves. Calvin sought for "subjection to the will of God," and taught his followers

to seek more for submission to, than for reception of, the grace of God. Luther's struggle was for forgiveness of sin; but, with his interpretation, it was more "a work done for him than done in him," and his followers hold rather to "justification *pro forma* than *pro spiritu*." Wesley sought and gained a higher state, — a religious consciousness that the "blood of Christ *cleanseth from all sin:*" he taught his followers that they were to know an inward, as well as outward holiness.

Wesley's teachings respecting the other great doctrines of Christianity were consistently conformable to his teaching of this. Did he speak of human depravity, he found in Christ's renewing grace a most effectual remedy for our depraved nature. He held with tenacity to the necessity of repentance and faith; but he found in the former the true preparation, and in the latter the only condition, of regeneration. He held that the Spirit of God bore witness to the adoption of his children; but he held that it was consistent, as well as scriptural, that the Spirit, working in man, should testify to its own gracious work. He taught that Christians may be made perfect in love; and he found this a proper corollary to the truth, that the love of God was shed abroad in every believer, and that the Word had fixed no limit, short of perfect love, to which a renewed heart should aspire. Teaching that a man was a Christian by sanctification, in obedience to the truth, and not in something irrespective of himself, he could but teach also, that, when this Christian nature was destroyed by sin, there was no certainty of final salvation but in a future repentance and faith. In fine, he made the central doctrine of practical Christianity to be the sanctification

of the heart, through the Spirit, by faith in Christ; and he found these other doctrines that he preached to be taught in the word of God, and illustrated and enforced, and consistent with this.

This dogma, if any please so to call it, became to the Wesleys and Whitefield an experienced reality that inspired them to preach it, and assured them in commending it to all who would hear; and Methodism itself, increasing and extending, is but the gathering into church relationship all those who become partakers of the same "sanctification through the Spirit."

The histories of the founders of Methodism, to the time when they began field-preaching, which was the first signal demonstrative effect of Methodism, show what was the impelling influence that moved them to preach in this way. But these histories will reveal more. They will show that the divine accompaniment of their word, which was the efficient cause of their success, was given to them as converted men, and that one must be himself the recipient of grace before he can impart it to others. The Spirit of God works by the fruits of the spirit. Both the Wesleys and Whitefield had been sincere and earnest laborers to lead others to the knowledge of religious things. Yet, though as indefatigably industrious, on this line, before their conversion as after, we have no reason to suppose that either of them had, to this time, been instrumental in leading a soul to the saving knowledge of the truth. If, then, immediately following their conversion, hundreds and thousands were converted by their labors, what is the legitimate inference, but that this experience, which God was pleased to honor, and to attend by his Spirit, to others, was the real origin of Methodism?

The lives of the Wesleys, previous to their conversion, are of value, besides simply teaching us the long and tedious way in which they were led to Christ. In these we learn that they were educated men; and they furnish us with a key to their peculiar gifts, afterward, in teaching and defending the truth. In these we find the secret of their future habits of order and regularity, that they imposed on their disciples. Living, as they did, at the headquarters of religious influence, — the University, — they became familiarly acquainted with the hopelessly irreligious character of the best society of the kingdom, and the weakness of any religious influences of the Church to reform the people. And, more than all, they learned, by a sincere and severely thorough trial, the utter insufficiency of all attempts to find acceptance with God from the most strict observance of ritualistic piety and of self-denial, — a lesson that was calculated to increase their future confidence in the work wrought in them by believing with the "heart unto righteousness." Their earlier histories form an interesting chapter, and disclose the initial steps by which they were to be better fitted as great reformers.

John and Charles Wesley were born at Epworth, Lincolnshire, England, — the former June 14, 1703; the latter Dec. 18, 1708. Their father, Samuel Wesley, was a man of fair talents, and for many years rector of Epworth Parish. Their mother, Susannah Wesley, was a woman of extraordinary intelligence, good judgment, and piety. Both the parents were decidedly High Church in all their convictions and preferences. They both labored — the mother assiduously and with success — to train their sons in their own faith and order. When the young men "entered upon their public career,

they were the strictest of strict Churchmen." At the age of eleven, John was sent to the Charter-House School, London. At seventeen, he was elected to Christ Church, Oxford. In both of these, he pursued his studies to great advantage. At the age of twenty-one, it is said, "he appeared the very sensible and acute collegian, possessed of a fine classical taste, and the most liberal and manly sentiments." He was afterwards elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and was appointed Greek Lecturer and Moderator of the classes.

When eight years of age, Charles was sent to Westminster School, from which he went to Oxford, and was elected a student of Christ Church. He attained to considerable eminence in classical scholarship.

It was while at Oxford that the two Wesleys became impressed with the importance of religion, as it consists in the right state of the heart. John was the first to receive these impressions, chiefly by reading three books that successively fell in his way. The first was Bishop Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," from which he learned that a simple intention is necessary to please God. The second was Kempis' "Christian Pattern," which strengthened his convictions of the spirituality of true religion. The third was Law's "Serious Call to a Holy Life." While these works forcibly inculcated purity of heart as the essence of Christian godliness, not one of them showed him how it was to be attained. His imperfect instructions left him unacquainted with the method in which the "ungodly are justified." They made him feel "O wretched man that I am!" but they did not disclose to him how he should be delivered from the dead body of sin that he found bound to him. His attempts to serve God were from servile fear rather than from constraining love.

John Wesley was ordained deacon in 1725. The following year he received ordination as priest, and for some time officiated as his father's curate, at Epworth. He then returned to Oxford. During his absence from the University, his brother Charles, and three other young men, had become deeply in earnest in regard to their religious state, and associated themselves together for mutual religious help. They subsequently received the nickname of the "Godly Club." On account of the strict regularity of their lives, they received the contemptuous name of "Methodists." John Wesley, on his return, joined them, and soon became, from his age and superior qualifications, their recognized leader. Their numbers increased. Finally, George Whitefield joined them.

Whitefield, who figured so conspicuously in connection with the Wesleys, in the origin of Methodism, was born at Gloucester, in 1714. His childhood life was vicious. At the age of fifteen, while acting as a common servant in the Bell Inn, kept by his mother, at Bristol, his mind became much impressed in respect to religious things by reading "Thomas à Kempis." It led him also to desire an education. He soon went to Oxford as a "poor student," and supported himself by service to his fellow-students. His mind took now an intensely religious turn. He fasted twice a week, for thirty-six hours together. He partook of the sacrament every ten days. He went three times a day to public worship, and seven times a day to his private devotions. But he says, "I knew no more that I was to be born again in God — born a new creature in Christ Jesus — than if I was never born at all." After about a year at Oxford, he was introduced to Charles Wesley, and by him to the "Godly Club."

The "Methodist Society," as it was now called, deserves our attention, especially as it reveals the real mind of its members, their sincerity, their devotion and self-denial, their benevolence, and their earnest endeavors to become righteous before God. They watched over each other's spiritual interests with fidelity and kindness. They saved all the money they could for pious and charitable purposes. They instructed the children of the neglected poor. They visited the sick and the prisoners in the common jail. They were frequent in secret prayer and public worship. They were often at the communion table. They observed scrupulously all the fasts of the Church. They responded with cheerfulness to the contempt and sarcasms of their fellow-students, bearing them all meekly, as they thought, for the reproach of Christ, that they might work out their salvation. A more sincere and intensely devout company of professed Christians could not have been found in the kingdom. Yet it all availed them nothing to give them "the peace that passeth understanding." They were devout in the spirit of bondage, but not with the spirit of sons.

But all this severe disciplinary and half-cloister training, important as it was to the Wesleys for their future life, was not all the preliminary instruction that they needed. They must prove how worthless was their piety, when tested by contact with the duties and labors of the outward world.

John Wesley was invited, in view of his father's declining health, to take the rectorship of Epworth. But he declined it. Soon after, he accepted an invitation from General Oglethorpe to go with a company to join the colony in Georgia; and, with his brother Charles, he

went as a missionary to the American Indians. They embarked from London, Oct. 14, 1835.

Hitherto, he had felt that all the strictness of his religious life did not satisfy his convictions of the necessity of a holy heart. Still it was so much better than the wicked world at Oxford, and approached so much nearer to the right way than that exhibited by the mass of professed Christians that he met, that he held firmly to it as the best. He was now to see its worthlessness in contrast with something better.

On board the same vessel with him were twenty-six German Moravians. They were a humble, devoted people, and held that true godliness consisted in the knowledge of sins forgiven through faith in Christ. Their lives were the exponents of the Spirit of God dwelling in them. Wesley's first serious awakening to the insufficiency of his own piety was from the conduct of these Moravians, during a violent storm at sea. The English emigrants, and he himself, were in great alarm. But the Germans were calm, and sung praises to God. He observed this, and was terribly impressed that his own religion did not save him from the fear of death.

His disquietude increased, when, after he landed and was consulting with one of the Moravian pastors respecting his ministerial labor, the good brother replied to him, "I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the evidence within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? Do you know Jesus Christ?"—"I know he is the Saviour of the world," replied Wesley. "True," said the Moravian; "but do you know that he has saved you?" Such home questions, and the holy lives that he observed in the Moravians, made him more and more dissatisfied with himself.

Yet he clung to his High Church notions. He said prayers early in the morning; preached, and had the communion service, at eleven; and held another service at three in the afternoon. "He refused to recognize any baptism which was performed by a clergyman who had not received Episcopal ordination." — "He refused the Lord's Supper to one of the most devout men of the settlement, who had not been baptized by an Episcopally ordained minister; and the burial service was denied to such as died with what he deemed unorthodox baptism." Both the Wesleys were groping their way in ignorance of the simplicity of the gospel, and of the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free.

John Wesley's strictness, and severe High Church course, involved him in difficulties with the colonists. His mission to the Indians was a failure; and first his brother, and soon after he, returned to England. But, if he had seemingly done no good to others, he had been aroused to see his own religious deficiency, and the necessity of something better for himself. His heart was ever crying, "O wretched man that I am!" On his way home he wrote, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh! who shall convert me?" After he landed, he wrote, "What have I learned myself? Why (what I least of all suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God."

His eyes had now been fully opened to see his want, and he refuses to be comforted by any ambiguous hopes. "The faith I want," he says, "is a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favor of God." The way to obtain it is soon to be revealed to him. From the Moravians, who had been the instruments in show-

ing him the blindness of unbelief in which he had been working, he is to be led to the knowledge of the truth. They, like Ananias, will come to him, and, laying hands on him, will say, "Brother, receive thy sight."

This devout people had established several small assemblies in London, for prayer and religious instruction. One of their teachers, Peter Bohler, had just arrived in the city. John Wesley met him. He went also frequently to the meetings of these assemblies. He took every opportunity of conversing with Bohler on the subject that now, more than all others, interested him, — the way of obtaining a new heart. He began to feel the insufficiency of forms of prayer, and resolved to pray "with or without forms, as might be suitable to particular occasions." His brother Charles, who had also been instructed by Peter Bohler, was the first to obtain the desired salvation. Charles had been taken sick, and was piously attended at the house of John Bray, a devout London mechanic. What was of more value than physical attendance, he was taught by him the way of saving faith.

About three days after Charles's conversion, John Wesley, who had been incessant in its pursuit, was also converted. He was listening, at the "Society" in Aldersgate Street, to the reading of Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. "At a quarter before nine," as he definitely fixes the time, he says, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

"From this time the two brothers were new men. A sensible application of the blood of Christ to their con-

sciences rendered them cheerful and happy, and produced in their hearts an intense love to their Saviour. Having obtained, by the simple exercise of faith in Christ, not only the abiding witness of the pardoning and adopting mercy of God, but also that purity of heart which they had long unsuccessfully endeavored to obtain by works of righteousness and by the law, they were astonished at their former errors, and felt an inexpressible desire to make known the great salvation to all men. Before this, they served God because they feared him; now they loved him from a joyous assurance that he had first loved them. They confessed that they had been mere *servants* of God; now they stood in *filial* relation to him. They had labored with all fidelity to benefit mankind, because they felt it to be their duty; but now the love of Christ kindled in their hearts a generous and yearning affection for the whole human race, and a willingness to lay down their lives, if others might only be converted and saved.

Whitefield's conversion was only a counterpart of the Wesleys', and preceded theirs by a few months. While they were in America, he was the leading spirit of the "Godly Club." Not less assiduously nor more successfully than they, he sought the assurance of faith by the severest self-mortifications, prayers, and fastings. His health failed. But the day of deliverance came, and he was enabled to embrace the cross by a living faith. "But, oh!" he says, "with what joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals, — a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. At

first my joys were like a spring-tide, and, as it were, overflowed the banks. Go where I would, I could not avoid singing psalms. Afterward they became more settled, and, blessed be God, saving a few casual interruptions, have abode and increased in my soul ever since."

Instantly he began to tell, publicly and privately, the gracious change wrought in and for him. Whether in Bristol or London, such was the "demonstration of the Spirit" attending his words that all the people were quickly moved to hear him.

We have been thus particular in our narrative of the process in the experiences of the Wesleys and Whitefield in order to make it clear that the co-operating evangelical movement of each of them originated in their conversions; and that it may be seen why it was, as we have before stated, that, before this time, though they were not lacking in zeal and effort, they had awakened no special interest in themselves, and had not, so far as we know, led one soul to the saving knowledge of Christ. Hitherto they had lived in uncertainty and dissatisfaction respecting their religious state. Now, for the first time, they have confidence in it, and assert with assurance the grace that they had found. Now there is seen a "power" accompanying their word as they assert that the new birth is a necessity for every man; and now also, in every place where they go, there are many who receive their testimony, and profess to seek and to find the knowledge of sanctifying grace. It was not by insisting on a ritualism in the observance of prayers and fastings and sacraments; it was not by requiring a formal confession of an orthodox doctrine; it was not by rallying men to organize themselves into societies, profitable

as it might be to assist them in the new way; but it was by preaching the assurance of the divine favor through faith in Christ, enjoyed by themselves, and offered as the privilege of all men, that they produced such immediate and marvellous results. The "Godly Club" was indeed the first to receive the name; but distinctive Methodism, as it is and has been, originated in Aldersgate Street rather than Oxford, in the little Moravian "Societies" of London rather than in the "Godly Club."

This opinion is indorsed by Mr. Wesley in all his writings. He says, "Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are repentance, faith, and holiness. The first of these we account the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself." He has incorporated in his interpretation of his "General Rules" a definition of Methodists: "A company, having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness. They have a desire to flee the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins."

A new heart, like the natural heart to the body, pervaded and gave vigor to the entire organism of Methodism. It was the first subject presented to the attention of all who desired to unite with the new sect. They were taught that by nature they were children of wrath, and must be born again. When admitted to the class, they were questioned whether their manner of living was consistent with the fruits of the Spirit. Every class-leader was required especially to know for himself, that Christ was a Saviour abiding in him. Every exhorter, local preacher, or itinerant had to profess, in some form, a like experience.

Many who have failed to see Methodism from this standpoint have attempted to attribute its origin and progress to some other and inferior agencies. Some

have referred these to the zeal and earnestness of its founders. True, they were zealous; but their zeal was inspired by the love of God, and sought only to show forth the praise of him that had called them into his marvellous light. Some have said that Methodism is indebted to its peculiar system for its vigor, and its extent in the world. It is admitted that the system has been helpful, perhaps necessary. But back of this there lies, what we shall consider more in another place, the unmistakable fact, that the system itself was constructed to cherish and to strengthen in all its members the life of godliness in the soul; and whatever excellence has appeared in the economy of Methodism is because of its adaptation to secure this end.

We do not propose to attempt the praise or defence of Methodism, only so far as a faithful portrait may be the praise of its subject. But one cannot fail to see a striking analogy between its origin and the early history of the primitive Church. That little society of Aldersgate Street was only a reproduction of the company in the upper room at Jerusalem, waiting with one accord in prayer and supplication for the promised Comforter. The descent of the Holy Ghost, filling the hearts of the expectant company on the day of Pentecost, was only repeated in those seasons of divine visitation when the Wesleys and their associates were filled with the Spirit. The preaching of Peter and the apostles, with other tongues, was only a type of the altogether new message of these modern itinerants, declaring with power the wonderful works of God. When the signs of the Spirit's work were noised abroad, and the people came together wondering, how signally it corresponded to the gathering of the colliers of Kingswood, astonished to hear such

strange truths from the lips of Wesley and Whitefield! Peter said to the people, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;" and Wesley found it the key-note for his discourse, and continued it, "for the promise is unto you and your children, and to as many as are afar off." The effects of their preaching were analogous also. The convicted Jews cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" The awakened hearers of Bristol and London said, "Show to us the way to obtain like precious faith." The converts of the early Church, drawn to each other by a common experience and a mutual love, met often for prayer and praise to God. So the early Methodists gathered together in class-meetings and love-feasts, "the Lord adding to them daily such as should be saved."

The analogy does not stop here. The rulers and the scribes, provoked by the success of the apostles' preaching, persecuted the new sect, and, with threats and violence, forbade them "to speak any more in this name." The means they used, as well as the temper they showed, find a second growth in the disposition and agencies everywhere introduced to suppress or destroy the Wesleys and their co-laborers. The preaching of Philip to the eunuch, of Peter to Cornelius, of Paul to Agrippa or the Athenians, corresponds closely to the doctrines and the directness in style of Wesley and Whitefield. The Spirit that impelled the disciples, scattered abroad by persecution, to go "everywhere preaching the Word," or that moved the church at Antioch to set apart Paul and Barnabas for the work to which they were called, or that led Paul to desire "to preach the gospel to regions beyond," was the same Spirit that inspired

Wesley to say, "The world is my parish;" the same Spirit stirring the hearts of his associates, to count not their lives dear to themselves, so that they might "tell, to all around, what a dear Saviour they had found."

An eminent Scotch divine said, after the vigor and kind of the tree had been proved by its fruits for nearly a century, "Methodism is Christianity in earnest." He might have said also, "It is primitive Christianity reproduced."

We have shown that the renewal of the heart by the inworkings of the Divine Spirit was the true origin of Methodism. It has been its life and soul to the present time. Had it ceased to be the characteristic of the denomination with its first awakening, or had it ended with the death of Wesley, or had it been only a specialty required by some peculiar state of society at the time, rather than the vital part of the new movement, its importance were less worthy of notice. But it has not ceased. It has been the theme of every successor of Wesley, and a fundamental part of the experience of every Methodist throughout the world, to the present day. It is a prominent and imperative doctrine in all Methodistic theology. If not a "Joseph's sheaf" to which all other doctrines do reverence, it has given a wise scriptural consistency and coloring to all the other doctrines of the Church. Regarded as the true test of Christian character by the Church, it has made its members a homogeneous people. Were they to be brought together from every land, however diverse their education in respect to other things, in this they would be agreed; and they could respond each to the other's testimony, and say, "There is therefore now no condemna-

tion to them who are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death."

CHAPTER III.

WESLEY AND HIS ASSISTANTS.

"That ye might be fellow-helpers to the truth."

IN the original pattern, the commissions to ministers, especially for evangelical service, Christ instructed them to go forth "two and two." Paul had Barnabas or Silas or Timotheus for a fellow-laborer. Luther needed the counsel and aid of his beloved Melancthon. John Wesley, who is to be the chief leader in the founding of Methodism, must not work alone. At the outset he required Whitefield to pioneer him, and his brother Charles for his support. To human appearance, John Wesley would not have ventured to break loose from the hampering restrictions of ecclesiastical order, and begin a course of independent evangelism that was to eventuate in an independent church establishment, had not Whitefield led the way, and taught him the practical advantages of field-preaching: he would not have broken the fetters of his prejudice, and overcome the "conceit" that "thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church," but for such a leader. Wesley needed Whitefield to lead him out to Hannam Mount, in Kingswood, and assure him, while he stood up without the walls of a church, and said to

the extemporized crowd of the colliers, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." When he saw the effect of his words, and the uncouth multitude moved to tears, his doubts gave way; and he no longer needed a *leader*, but a *helper*, to continue in his work.

Any account of the initial period of Methodism must be chiefly a narrative of Wesley and a few of his assistants. Nor can one well understand its subsequent progress without examining the impulsions and resistances that affected them in its introduction. What we read of Peter and Paul in the Acts, is sufficient to determine what was the organization and temper of the primitive Church: no one could give a correct opinion respecting the scripturalness of the Christianity of any future period, were he ignorant of the scripture narrative of these apostles.

The *workmen* of early Methodism may be divided into three classes. *First*, the *principals*, who were John and Charles Wesley, and Whitefield. *Second*, its *patrons*, embracing the clergy of the Establishment — and there were many — who were in sympathy with the Wesleys in their views of justification by faith and its assurance, but who did not give themselves to an itinerant life. They retained their settlements in their parishes, had Wesley's spirit, and imitated his directness in preaching. They were ready to open their churches to the Wesleys, and entertain them at their houses. They were true and sincere counsellors, and defended the reputation and labors of the Wesleys against the attacks of their assailants; hearty and devout men, giving aid and comfort to the itinerants in many substantial forms.

Third, the *helpers*, as they were called, — real ministers

of Christ; men, commonly, from the humble class of society, who, having been converted by the preaching of the Wesleys, soon found themselves impelled by a "divine moving" to associate with them, and be subject to them, and to go out and preach to others the Word that had proved to them the word of life.

Each of these classes had its peculiar relation to the new religious movement, and affected its progress by a different line of labors and in different degrees. But each performed an important part in giving it success, and in making it felt in the land.

The men who compose the first class were so interwoven in their histories, and were such mutual aids and counsellors in starting Methodism, that for a few years, at least, it is quite impossible to assign to each any position of influence independent of the other. They must be seen in a group, rather than separately.

In one respect they were much alike. They had each proved the futility of all attempts to obtain a salvation of "assurance" by the severest methods of self-consecration. They had each attempted, and sincerely too, to work out a righteousness by fastings, labors, and self-denials, — and all in vain. Probably there were not three men in England who sought to obtain the divine favor by these rigid processes more indefatigably and punctiliously than they. To such a degree did they carry it, as to make themselves proverbial. It led to their receiving the derisive name of "Methodists."

We must not suppose, however, that all the time they thus spent in the vain pursuit of self-righteousness was time wasted. Far from it. They were passing through a disciplinary stage, positively essential for their future life and usefulness. All their preaching was to be based

on the simple truth, "By faith are ye saved," — "not by works of righteousness that ye have done, but by his precious blood." This theme they were to present to both the outcast sinner and the complaisant formalist; to the ecclesiastic of the metropolis and the collier of Newcastle. And, in repudiating the merit of works, they should be as confident in saying, "We speak what we know," as that they should be able, having "found peace in believing," to declare, "By grace hath he saved us."

They were alike, too, in that, in this world, they were poor. This negative virtue of poverty placed them on a level, at least, with all who have been called to do great things in God's service. The rector of Epworth had but a poor stipend to clothe and feed so many children; and Whitefield was a charity scholar, supporting himself at Oxford by service to his fellow-students.

Their mission was to the poor, almost exclusively. It seemed as if Providence had made it their specialty, and prepared them beforehand to sympathize with those of low estate, — "not many mighty, not many noble, are called." This law has found no exceptions, from the calling of the fishermen of Galilee to the commissions given the leaders of Methodism.

In other respects they were quite unlike. In gifts they were very diverse. The positive and negative poles of an electrical battery are not more opposite to each other than were the natural endowments of John Wesley and Whitefield; yet they were of one spirit. John Wesley had an "instinct" for order. It was as natural a sentence as he ever wrote, "Do every thing by rule." He followed it, and insisted that everybody else should. System and discipline were to him the substance of a great commandment with promise. In this, consisted his power to

organize and conserve all his converts. He put them in classes, made regulations that were, in exactness, like the machinery of a clock, and appointed those who would keep it running. "Living by rule" applied to his hour for rising, the time for study and reading and prayers; and he applied it to all others whom he controlled. It was this gift that made him capable of doing so much work, and of making so much of what he did, — that made him the executive man of Methodism.

Whitefield was quite unlike him in regard to order and rule. He could not be said to be heedless of these, but he lacked skill in applying them. He saw what was good, but how to perform he knew not. He knew how to plant, but knew but little how to train the growing vine. He could reap well, but could not bind in bundles, and store in the garner. Hence much of his labor went for nought. His zeal was unexcelled. His vast audiences were moved by him, as the forest is bent by the tempest. Many were converted by the truth; but they were left to others' care, and commonly were scattered and perished.

Charles Wesley was a mean between his brother John and Whitefield. He approved of the system and order that John devised and enjoined, and under his brother's direction would obey and enforce them; but, of himself, he never would have invented them.

Whitefield cared little for the canons of the Established Church, especially if they interfered with his good impulsions to preach the word. If the church doors were closed against him, he had no scruples about preaching by the roadside, or in the market-place. He consorted as heartily with the Dissenter of England, the Puritan of New England, or the Presbyterian of the Jerseys, as with the surpliced priest of the Establishment. If any

called him "irregular," it availed nothing with him. To preach the gospel to whom and where he might, was "heaven's first law" in his esteem, and he obeyed it fearlessly.

Charles Wesley was always and incurably a rigid *churchman.* If ever he practised what seemed irregularities, he was the last to approve them, and with perpetual misgivings. He fell into them, though with an indisposed grace, through his respect for his brother, and his confidence in John's superior judgment.

John was the mean between Charles and Whitefield. He loved and respected the Church, and with reluctance consented to adopt any measures that did not recognize its order. He never would do it until it appeared to be a necessity, demanded by the interest of true religion. But he then defended his course with a tenacity and decision as positive as if he had been a life-long Dissenter, and as if he knew he was obeying the voice of God.

Whitefield was in every sense the greatest orator of the three. When a youth, he was observed for his powers in declamation. His voice was marvellously rich in melody, and wide in compass. He could make the immense multitudes that listened to him hear distinctly every word. His gesticulation was natural, easy, and appropriate. He illustrated his themes by the most familiar scenes of common life. Though he never compromised his dignity as a preacher, he had a vein of humor that gave great attractiveness to his words. He made his exuberant imagination subserve the most pathetic and earnest appeals. There was an easy looseness in his style that made his sermons more profitable and popular than they would have been in a more correct and fastidious arrangement. In natural gifts he was

an orator. When these were brought under contribution to an inspiration fired by his love of Christ and souls, and employed to portray the scenes of Calvary and the judgment day, he held with magic power every ear, and moved irresistibly every heart of his audience. He ought to be ranked the *first pulpit orator that ever lived.* But his charm was in his address. One can hardly believe that the printed sermons, reputed to be his, are genuine. They are tame and desultory.

Both the Wesleys, before an audience, were far inferior to Whitefield. Still they were not uninteresting, and were superior to most other men of their times. John, from his peculiarly benignant expression, and his fervent and devout manner, always secured the attention and heart of his hearers. His precise and concise style made his sermons instructive, and their effect more abiding. But his printed sermons are masterpieces of logic, and have been read and admired more, probably, than any sermons that were ever published.

In the preceding chapter we have, in order to show the real moving cause of Methodism, given the narrative and experience of these men to the time when they were, in common phrase, converted. They began at once to declare with power the great fundamental truth of Methodism,— that God had power on earth to forgive sins, and to assure men of that forgiveness. This was properly the beginning of Methodism. We have now to follow them as they went forth with their new life to dare and to do the work God bade them. They soon gave to the new movement form and consistency. They initiated and established communities of believers, which, united and widely diffused, have become the largest church of Protestant Christendom.

Whitefield, the first of the three to receive the "Spirit of adoption," was at Oxford, and the two Wesleys in Georgia. He visited Bristol for his health, and, by invitation of the Bishop of Gloucester, received ordination. He preached his first sermon in the church where he had been baptized, and where he had received his first communion. The effect of his sermon was great. It was reported to the bishop that "fifteen of his hearers had gone mad."

Immediately after he preached at Oxford, then at the Tower in London, and again at Bristol. His zeal and his eloquence made him a great attraction wherever he went, and immense crowds flocked to hear him. One can hardly fail to see in the excitement attending his ministry something like the movement from Jerusalem and all Judea to hear the Baptist, and also to think that perhaps the awakening created was a kind of preparatory influence to a work that should be more abiding when he and the Wesleys should fully open to the people the mission of Methodism.

By the invitation of the Wesleys, he went to America; and they, ignorant of his departure, returned to England. Whitefield was disappointed in his mission to the New World, and in a few months he, too, returned. Meanwhile both the Wesleys, principally through the influence of Moravian teaching, had been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The Wesleys and Whitefield met again in England. What a meeting! Since they last met, all three of them had received the renewing grace that made them more than ever one in Christ. They were now imbued with a spirit that moved them to engage in a work together, which, though unseen to themselves, would asso-

ciate their names as the most remarkable evangelists of modern times. They began their work at once.

The introduction to it is soon told. Charles Wesley had already been preaching in the churches of London. The directness and temper of his discourses had attracted large audiences. But his word was too severe for the slumbering consciences of the people; and, one after another, the churches were closed against him. He found ready hearers only among the convicts of Newgate, and a few small religious assemblies in London that had been revived by the Moravians. John Wesley began preaching in the churches on Sundays; but he was soon treated as his brother had been. He presented the truth too plainly for the state of religious life around him; and, expelled from the churches, he was driven to the prisons and hospitals. Whitefield attempted the same thing. Before he went to America, all London came to hear him. The devotion of the people to his ministry was enthusiastic. But the public mind had been changed; and very soon he, too, was forbidden the churches. He went to his favorite Bristol, where his popularity had been unbounded, and he had been idolized by the city. In less than two weeks, not a church would admit him. These three men had gone "to their own, and their own received them not." What should they do?

We come now to the event that is the decisive, determining one in the introduction of Methodism. It is *field-preaching*. A great and effectual door was opened. The great apostle, when rejected by the Jews, turned to the Gentiles. It was for the good of the Gentiles. Had the churches remained open to the Wesleys, it is quite likely that they might have been instrumental in resus-

citating many of them with an increased spiritual life. But it is quite as probable that the influence of canonical restraints and the loss of independence, to which they would have been subject, would have made their work only partial and temporary; and, what is more evident, had they not been driven out of the churches, and compelled to take to the fields, the class of hearers, the poor and degraded, to whom they were to be apostles, and who were to be lifted up to form the principal body of the new church, would never have heard the Word. "The things which happened unto them turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."

Whitefield led the way, and took to the fields. Dr. Stevens says, "Not far from Bristol lies Kingswood, a place which has since become noted in the history of Methodism. It was formerly a royal chase; but its forests had mostly fallen, and it was then a region of coal mines, inhabited by a population which is described as lawless and brutal, worse than heathens, and differing as much from the people of the surrounding country in dialect as in appearance. There was no church among them, and none nearer than the suburbs of Bristol, three or four miles distant. Whitefield found here an unquestionable justification of field-preaching." "He crossed the Rubicon, and virtually led the incipient Methodism across it, by the extraordinary irregularity of preaching in the open air. Standing upon a mount, he proclaimed the truth to about two hundred degraded and astonished colliers." —"Blessed be God," he writes, "that the ice is now broken, and I have now taken the field. Some may censure me, but is there not a cause? Pulpits are denied, and the poor colliers are ready to perish for lack of knowledge."

He repeated his services, and his congregations increased until they numbered from ten to fifteen thousand. The moral grandeur of the scene impressed him, and the influence of his sermons upon the colliers affected his own heart. They came unwashed from the coal-pits, and while he spoke to them of Christ, the Saviour of the world, and their Saviour, they, who were unused to such words of love and mercy, listened weeping, and the tears made gutters down their sooty cheeks.

He sent for Wesley to come and help him, and he came. But Wesley found, at first, this irregularity repugnant to his church notions of propriety, and he hesitated to comply with Whitefield's request. He says, "I could hardly reconcile myself to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church." It was a severe struggle between the prejudices of his education and the earnest, honest yearnings of his heart to do good. Which would conquer was not long a doubt. He always obeyed the impulses of his heart. In a few days he was standing on the top of Hannam Mount, Kingswood, and proclaiming to five thousand colliers, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink." He never went backward. He was now fully initiated, and henceforth he was to be the great field-preacher of the kingdom. And field-preaching was to be the chief instrumentality for the introduction of Methodism. Its first fruits were a moral renovation of the character and habits of the dwellers of Kingswood.

Whitefield was naturally a restless itinerant. Leaving

Wesley at Bristol, he went to Wales, and co-operated with Griffith Jones, a clergyman of the Established Church, who had already introduced into the principality a system of itinerant schools for instructing the people to read the scriptures and the catechism. Here he was joined with Howell Harris, another evangelist, who had been laboring after the Whitefield manner for more than three years. These men were kindred spirits; and the result of their associate efforts in Wales was the ultimate elevation of the people from a fearfully low, immoral state to one of earnest and consistent spiritual life. Whitefield became the principal evangelist to the Welsh.

While John Wesley continued the open-air preaching at Bristol, Whitefield, having returned from Wales, began it at Moorfields, London. Charles Wesley, assured by their example, began it in Essex and other places, and with similar success. His faith and courage were, however, put to a test. The archbishop cited him to Lambeth, and threatened him with excommunication for his irregular course. How far this threat, united with his strong attachment to church order, might have led him to desist, at least to hesitate, it is difficult to say, had not Whitefield, who was as indifferent to Episcopal warnings as Diogenes to the rich carpets of Plato, encouraged him to proceed in the "good way," and "led him out to Moorfields on the following Sunday, where he preached three times to 'multitudes on multitudes.'" The three evangelists were now fully and positively committed to the independent movement, and boldly they went forward, — field-preaching.

The details of their labors as itinerants would be entertaining, but hardly consistent with our design. We

soon find John Wesley becoming the controlling mind of, and giving direction and form to, Methodism. He no longer needed Whitefield as a leader. He travelled far and near, preaching to the poor and vile wherever he could find them. His brother, less leading but not less zealous and tireless, rivalled him in abundant labors and in sufferings. Whitefield, restless to occupy the regions beyond, after preaching a few months, chiefly in Kingswood and Moorfields, left again for America, and committed the home field to his compeers. The narrative of their journeys, preachings, persecutions, and successes, would be only a continued record of the marvellous. Now we find them in Cornwall, and then at Newcastle; now in Wales, and then in the metropolis; now crossing St. George's Channel to Ireland, and then rallying their devoted societies at Kingswood or Yorkshire. Sometimes they were assailed by mobs, sometimes taken with violence before magistrates; often stoned, and their lives in peril. But moving onward, right onward, with zeal and courage unabated, "though stripes and bonds awaited them," they were cheered in every place by the power attending the Word, and by the multitudes that were gathered by them into the fold of the Chief Shepherd.

John Wesley had no idea that the ministry of the gospel should be "as water spilled on the ground, that could not be gathered up again." He thought it should be rather as "good seed" in "good ground," to spring up and be nourished, — to "bring forth thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold." He had a solicitude that the sheep he had found in their wanderings should be gathered in some protecting fold, and housed against the storms. How should it be done?

The number of converts at Bristol increased. These he associated in classes, and appointed to each class a "leader" of acknowledged piety and wisdom. Wherever he went, and two or three were found who "desired to save their souls," he joined them in a "class." Very soon these little spiritual nurseries were organized all over the land. Wesley was recognized as their general supervisor and religious guide. Hence came the "Methodist class-meeting."

It was necessary that these "classes," or "societies" as they were sometimes called, should be homogeneous, to maintain a hearty fellowship and union with each other. He prepared and sent forth the "General Rules." They contained the conditions and requisitions for all who united with him, and would be subject to his control. These famous "Rules" are the real charter of organized Methodism. By them the increasing bands have been made and preserved one in spirit and discipline all over the world. By them the disciples, with the ordinances administered, became at once *de facto*, if not *de jure*, a real church of Christ.

Another want arose. Wesley had not gone to the fields to preach from preference, but from necessity. He saw at once that this was not to be the rule, but the exception, and that some provision must be made for houses of worship. The multitude of worshippers at Bristol must be accommodated. The work had begun, and could not go backward; and he erected a preaching place in that city. About the same time, he bought an old dilapidated building, formerly used for casting cannon, in Moorfields. He repaired it, and the "old foundry" became the first Methodist chapel. To it belonged memories and honors as the mother chapel of a great

people. Other chapels were soon built throughout the kingdom, and gave material evidence of the progress of Methodism. Meanwhile the Wesleys were found, with almost ubiquitous presence, cheering, counselling, and guiding the rapidly growing church.

Whitefield returned from America. He had passed like a meteor through the colonies. A few really evangelical spirits had welcomed and encouraged him. From Virginia to New England, he had breathed into many of the existing churches a life that aroused them as from a deathly sleep. The effect of his labors were well called "the great awakening." From some cause, perhaps his familiarity with the Calvinistic doctrines, or his intimacy with the Calvinistic ministry of the colonies, Whitefield returned to England a Calvinist. Wesley was an Arminian, and too rigid to admit the teaching of distinctive Calvinism in his societies. Whitefield was too independent and honest to be restrained from teaching what he believed. And they separated. At first it was partial alienation as well as separation. Subsequently, they were reconciled in feeling. They divided, however, in labor, each to his peculiar and separate field, — Wesley to be the champion and leader of Arminianism, and the founder of a church holding the van in progressive Protestant Christianity; Whitefield to lead for a while another band, under the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon, respectable in its influence and numbers, and infusing an increased spiritual life into the Independents of the realm.

We have referred to a *second* class of Wesley's assistants. It included those who may be called, with a proper qualification, his "patrons." These formed an agency, in planting Methodism, of sufficient importance to justify a brief notice of their work.

Wherever the Wesleys went, preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom, they occasionally met with sincere and independent men — clergymen in the Establishment — that listened to their message honestly, and not unfrequently were led through their teaching to a like precious faith. A few of these were thus affected when Charles Wesley began his ministry in the churches in London. They embraced his new views, and were converted. Three years had not passed before quite a number of them were found scattered in different parts of the kingdom. Few, if any of them, were in high ecclesiastical stations; for such men generally turned away from the Wesleys. But they held curacies, and occasionally a rectory; and it gave them an opportunity to sympathize with the itinerants, and often to give them substantial assistance. With them the Wesleys found a resting-place in their journeys, and, what was of more value, words of cheer and a hearty "God speed." Some of them adopted the Wesleyan style of directness in preaching, and went out, after Wesley's manner, and itinerated, preaching to the poor in regions beyond the limits of their own parishes. They defended the characters and conduct of the Wesleys when assailed by their enemies, and often interposed their influence and authority to protect them from violence and abuse. Some of them submitted to persecution and the loss of place for the defence of the truth. Among these noble men, in the beginning, was John Hodges, rector of Weuvo, Wales, who opened his own pulpit to the Wesleys, and accompanied them in their different routes and out-door preaching. There was Henry Piers, vicar of Bixby, a convert of Charles Wesley, whose pulpit and home were ever open to him and his brother; Samuel Taylor, vicar of Quin-

ton, who was himself known as an itinerant evangelist; and John Meriton, a clergyman from the Isle of Man, who labored extensively both in England and Ireland. A little later was Rev. Vincent Perronet, vicar of Shoreham, a man of saintly piety, who became Wesley's confidential counsellor, and gave two sons to the itinerant ministry. Perronet's house was often the resort of both the Wesleys for consultation. He adopted their strongest views of personal religion, and wrote several pamphlets in defence of Methodism. So important were his counsels in the early stages of Methodism that Charles Wesley used to call him its "archbishop." Another active "patron" was William Grimshaw, curate of Haworth, in Yorkshire. "He retained his parish in Haworth, but superintended two Methodist circuits which included it, and extended over many towns in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire. So thorough were his labors on these districts, that they usually bore the name of 'Grimshaw's circuits,' and the lay itinerants the title of 'Grimshaw's preachers.'" * One other must be named,— Rev. John W de la Fletcher, vicar of Madely. Though he appears several years later than those already mentioned, he came into notice, and performed a work, at a time when his services were imperiously demanded. "He was Wesley's most ardent coadjutor in the Establishment; his counsellor, his fellow-traveller, an attendant at his Conferences, the champion of his theological views, and, above all, a saintly example of the life and power of Christianity as taught by Methodism, read and known, admired and loved, by Methodists throughout the world." †

How much these men, and others like them, were es-

* Stevens's History of Methodism. † Id.

sential to the onward progress of the new religious movement, it is impossible to tell. Certain it is, that by direct labor they contributed to its influence and added to its converts. But they did more. They encouraged and countenanced the leaders, who might, without their aid, have fainted and been disheartened.

The Wesleys were of like passions with other men. Especially were they jealous, perhaps too much so as seen from our standpoint, lest they should be suspected of a desire to create schism, and divert the members of the Methodist societies from the communion of the Church. They must have felt that the countenance of the best and most zealous clergy would shield them from such suspicion. At least, it encouraged them while adopting such aggressive, though irregular, measures as they believed would advance the work of evangelization. Indirectly, as well as directly, these *patrons* were helpers to the Wesleys.

The *third* class of Wesley's assistants, and we think the most efficient class, were his *lay preachers*. Wesley had but little confidence in the religious characters and teachings of most of the regular clergy. He knew, too, that the members of his societies had no confidence in them. But he did not conceive that it could be proper for a layman to turn preacher. His repugnance to this was as strong as that of Peter to go and preach to the Gentiles. It needed that God should say to him, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

Word came to Wesley at Bristol that Thomas Maxwell, one of his exhorters at the Foundry, had been preaching. It was a great tax on his equanimity. He hastened to London, determined to punish the offender, or at least to put a stop to this irregularity. His mother,

who always seemed to be his guiding angel in any perplexity, met him on his arrival, and, seeing that his countenance indicated some anxiety or dissatisfaction, inquired the cause. He replied, perhaps rather curtly, "Thomas Maxwell has turned preacher, I hear." — "Take care, John," said she, "what you do respecting that young man;" and she advised him to hear Maxwell for himself before he decided the matter. His mother's counsel had always great weight with Wesley. He went and heard Maxwell. He was convinced that Maxwell ought to preach; and he said, "It is the Lord; let him do as seemeth him good."

Thomas Maxwell was the first Methodist lay preacher; but he was only one of a host like him who were soon thrust out to labor for the evangelization of Great Britain, equal in talent, zeal, and success to any ministers that have ever lived.

Hardly a year passed, before at least thirty of these "lay preachers," and Wesley's most vigorous assistants, were duly authorized for the ministry of the Word.

The Wesleys had proved, by their own experience, the helplessness and hopelessness of self-righteousness. Hence they could say to others, "By grace" *only* "are ye saved." But their message was chiefly to the lower classes, — men who made no pretensions to self-righteousness, who were covered with sin; and the difficulty of these men would be in believing that God could save such vile wretches at all. It was therefore necessary that God should raise up a class of preachers who had been delivered from like corruption and wickedness, — who could say to those like them, "He saved us, and he will save you." God ordinarily gives to every man that he calls to preach to others some experience to

confirm the truth he is called to preach. These men, miracles of grace, could say unto the worst, "We speak what we do know," when they exhorted the vilest sinners to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

We are interested in this new phase of the great religious movement, not only because of the wonderful work of God wrought by the lay preachers and their "*apostolic successors*," not only because they showed how the grace of God could be magnified by putting "the treasure in earthen vessels," but because it put such contempt on the arrogance and pretension of other men, who, affecting to depise these, assumed that the call of man to the ministry was superior to the call of God.

In the days of Christ, and in the days of Wesley, those who pretended to instruct in religion based their authority on their superior social position and on their liberal education. They virtually denied the necessity of a preparation that is from above. He who intended to set at nought the arrogant pretensions of the scribes and Pharisees, by choosing men for his apostles from their nets and from the seat of the publican, had the same design in calling Nelson from the work of a stone-mason, and Samuel Bradburn from the cobbler's bench, and Asbury from the humble peasantry of Staffordshire. Not that he would make learning a disqualification for the sacred office, — for he added a learned Saul of Tarsus to the college of apostles, and he selected the Wesleys, who were among the best educated men of their age, — but because he would show that human learning is subordinate to the higher gift of divine instruction, and he would confound the assumption that human wisdom was the chief endowment of the ministry of reconciliation.

The introduction of Wesley's "lay preachers" was something new; at least, it was the revival of something so old as to have fallen into disuse and disrepute. Yet these preachers were only the first fruits of a great clerical harvest. Some have affected to believe that they were designed as a merely extemporized agency, to meet an emergency for the day, and then to cease; that they had a special mission, to be quickly fulfilled, and then to end. So far from this, they appear to have been a kind of primary model, after which God intended his future ministry should be made. There might be some modifications required in the mould, to perfect their successors for the demands of the future state of society and of the Church; but in the spirit of their call, in the substance of their work, and in the chief qualification for it, — the renewal of the heart by the Holy Ghost, — Wesley's first itinerant evangelists were the real types of a host of divinely-appointed ministerial successors. They were the true "fathers" of whom their sons may boast, and whom they should ever delight to honor.

The history of these men has all the wonder and extravagance of fiction. They came from the lowest rank of social life, and had none of the trainings of refinement; but they commended themselves with dignity and unembarrassed ease in the presence of every class of society. They had, usually, no early advantages of education; but, by a gracious intuition, they possessed a knowledge, especially the knowledge of divine things, that fitted them clearly and forcibly to expound the Word, and that made them ready in every emergency for its defence. Their audiences included every variety of men, — the ignorant, the pretentious, the violent, and the wicked. But they instructed the

ignorant, rebuked the arrogant, subdued the violent, and led the guilty, convicted of their sins, to the knowledge of God. They labored incessantly, without weariness or fainting. They were reviled, slandered, assaulted; but they received these things with meekness, and prayed earnestly for their persecutors. Every hindrance to their success only stimulated their zeal, and hardened their endurance. Every peril only emboldened their courage. Very rarely indeed would one of them cease his evangelical mission. Scarcely one of them departed from the faith. Human history has not furnished a class of men who showed by their devotion and perseverance more incorruptible persistence in fulfilling their commissions, and preaching the Lord Jesus. These were the men that God brought out to be Wesley's "aids." A noble race for a noble work.

The good effects of the preaching of these men were immediate, astonishing, well-attested, and well-commended. Determined by simple arithmetic, their success resembled the revival of Pentecost, and converts were multiplied by scores, sometimes by hundreds. If judged by the radical reforms produced in the characters and lives of their subjects, their work often appears semi-miraculous, and as if Christ were again present, casting out demons, and clothing the delivered ones with a right mind. The manners of whole communities were suddenly reformed by the presence of these itinerants. They accomplished more for good order and improving morals throughout the kingdom than any other, perhaps than every other, agency of the realm. More than this, and better, the converts became a devout, praying, and holy people, reforming others as well as being self-reformed. The ministry of these despised,

persecuted, and reputedly ignorant lay preachers was instrumental in arresting the downward tendency of the social, moral, and religious life of England, and in giving it an impulse upward that has continued to the present time.

A brief sketch of a few of the lay itinerants who "assisted" Wesley in the first quarter of a century of Methodism will be interesting. It will also show the "ring of the metal" of which all of them were made.

John Nelson is a good specimen. He was an honest, sturdy Yorkshire stone-mason. While working at his trade in London, he heard Mr. Wesley preach at Moorfields. He had lived among his fellow-workmen a steady life, avoiding their many excesses in profanity and drunkenness. He had tried in various ways, but to no avail, to satisfy the demands of his conscience, and secure the favor of God. "Surely," he said, "God never made man such a riddle to himself, and to leave him so." The truth from Wesley's lips was the message of God to him. It revealed to him what he had long been ignorantly seeking. He found peace with God. He soon returned to Bristol, where his good wife lived, and began to tell his friends there, "that this new faith, as they called it, was the old faith of the gospel," and that he "was as sure that his sins were forgiven as he could be of the shining of the sun." The truth was soon "noised abroad," and the "people came together, wondering." At first he expounded to them the Word, sitting in his house, after the work of the day was over. The crowd became too great for the room; and he began to preach to them in front of his house, in the open air. His address, from private conversation, became public discourse, and he was unpremeditatedly initiated as a lay

preacher. The reports of his success reached Wesley in London, who went to visit him, and to direct his future labors. He immediately recognized Nelson as one of his preachers, and often took him with him as an aid in his many itinerant journeys. Often these journeys and labors were distinguished for characteristic trials. They went to Cornwall, and preached every night among the population of West Cornwall. Methodism was unknown among many of the villages, and the itinerants often suffered from the want of the common comforts of life. Nelson says of their condition, "All this time, Mr. Wesley and I lay on the floor: he had my great coat for his pillow, and I had 'Burkitt's Notes on the New Testament' for mine. After being here nearly three weeks, one morning, about three o'clock, Mr. Wesley turned over, and, finding me awake, clapped me on the side, saying, 'Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer: I have one whole side yet, for the skin is off but one side.' One day Mr. Wesley preached from Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. As we returned, Mr. Wesley stopped his horse to pick the blackberries, saying, 'Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting a stomach, but the worst that I ever saw for getting food. Do the people think we can live by preaching?'"

Nelson soon became a vigorous itinerant. He wrought at his trade by day, and preached at night. His courage, piety, and apt speech attracted attention wherever he went. He had many converts. He spread Methodism through Yorkshire, Cornwall, Lincolnshire, and Lancashire. He had such a genial, hearty spirit, and popular manner, that the rudest men delighted

to listen to him. Even the vilest, who came to disturb his meetings, were often arrested by his generous undaunted ways, and gave over their wicked, sometimes murderous purposes.

Every form of opposition was resorted to, to hinder his preaching or to destroy him. In one place they threw squibs at him; quite often the rabble, headed perhaps by the parish priest, beat drums around him, to prevent the congregation hearing him. Sometimes they assaulted the house where he lodged. At Bristol he was seized and impressed for the army. As he lay in jail at Bradford,— a vile place that, he said, "smells like a pig-stye," — his wife, who had two young children to care for, came and exhorted him, "Fear not: the cause is God's for which you are here, and he will plead it himself. Therefore be not concerned about me and the children. He that feeds the young ravens will be mindful of us. He will give you strength for your day." Thence he was taken to prison at Leeds. A stranger offered a hundred pounds, security, to bail him out. Many came and worshipped with him in the prison. Soon after this, he was taken to York, guarded by armed troops, and the people shouted around him as if he had been the vilest pest of the nation. "But," he says, "the Lord made my brow like brass; so that I could look on them like grasshoppers, and pass through the city as if there had been none in it but God and me." But, harassing and perilous as was his condition, he preached Christ from the window of his prison, or to the soldiers, and with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. After being marched about the country for three months, he was released, through the influence of Lady Huntingdon, and, on the night of his discharge, preached with his usual zeal and boldness at Newcastle.

His persecutions, though severe, were only such as were common to his fellow-laborers. At one place they had a halter ready for his neck, and were kept from using it by that mysterious power which God often shows in paralyzing the arm of the persecutor; at another time he was prostrated, bleeding, to the earth, by a brick thrown at him, and hitting him on the back of his head. An honest man rescued him from the mob; a surgeon dressed his wound; and the same day he was on his way to preach at another place. Here he was more fearfully assaulted than before. He was knocked down eight times, dragged over the stones for many rods, and kicked again and again as he lay bleeding. The rabble stood on him, and threatened to "tread the Holy Ghost out of him." They threatened to throw him into a well; but a heroic woman defied them, knocked several of his persecutors down, and delivered him.

Imagine this man of iron constitution and will rallying the next day from this murderous assault, and riding forty miles, and sitting in the evening with undaunted spirit, resting himself against a tombstone in the graveyard at Ormotherly, listening to a sermon from Wesley. Out of all the Lord saved him. Whether by his intervening hand he saved him from his assailants, or by the suddenness of his recovery, or by the support of his grace, or by all these, who shall say?

John Nelson lived to maintain his Christian integrity, and to labor in the ministry, for thirty-three years. He died at Leeds. "Amid thousands of spectators, a procession nearly half a mile long, sobbing and singing, bore the remains of the heroic man through the town of Leeds, and along the highway, to lay him to rest in his native village of Birstal, — the place of his first ministrations

and greatest triumphs. Aged men, who remembered and shared his earliest trials, and children who had heard the story of them told at the fireside by their fathers, followed him to the grave, as a grateful people follow a fallen hero who has helped to save their country. Leeds had seldom or never witnessed a more affecting scene." *

He had all those noble qualities that secure the confidence of the ungodly, the respect of authority, and the hearty love of the Christian. Probably no man that ever trod English soil, except Whitefield, had greater influence than Nelson over a religious assembly. If the number of converts is any test of the genuineness of a divine call to the ministry, few men could give better evidence of such a call than Nelson. No man, except John Wesley, did more than he in the first thirty years of Methodism, to diffuse its influence and preserve its spirit.

But let us look more briefly at another of the early "lay ministry."

Thomas Walsh was an Irishman. His parents were rigid Romanists; and to his eighteenth year, from early childhood, he followed with strict observance all the requirements of Romanism. The mass, confession, and fasting were strictly and frequently observed. He then saw, chiefly from conversation with his brother, who had renounced Popery, the lack of any evidence in the scriptures to sustain it; and he formally abjured it, and united with the Established Church. But his mind was in unrest. He heard Robert Swindell, a Methodist itinerant, and a purer light began to dawn upon his mind. "I was divinely assured," he says, "that God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven all my sins." He now gave himself

* Stevens.

to study, and mastered, besides his native Irish language, the English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew: the latter was a special delight to him. The Bible was his chief study, and his mind was a complete concordance of the Scriptures. Dr. Stevens says, "The record of his life seemed to be a combination and impersonation of the Hebraic grandeur of the old prophets, the mystic piety of the papal saints, and the scriptural intelligence and purity of Protestantism." He began to preach. His first sermon, while some mocked and others wept, "demonstrated the genuineness of his mission." He went through Limerick, Leinster, and Connaught, preaching twice or thrice a day in the open air. His Irish tongue gave him special access to the Romanists. They flocked to him, and many of them were converted to the truth. The Papal priests, angered by his success, instigated every form of persecution to destroy him. In the north of Ireland, he was violently abused by Protestant assailants. But the people came in multitudes to hear him, and many rejoiced to obtain the blessedness of "like precious faith." "No man contributed more than he to the diffusion of Methodism in Ireland."

Wesley transferred him to London; and his preaching, especially to his Irish countrymen, was not less effectual than it had been in Ireland. He lived only about nine years after he commenced his ministry; but they were years of prodigious labor and study, and of remarkable success. Wesley says of him, "I do not remember ever to have known a preacher, who, in so few years as he remained upon earth, was an instrument of converting so many sinners."

We might give an account of the noble deeds and character of many more of Wesley's assistants. The

record would exhibit their industry, self-denial, and persecution, and a series of successes worthy of the apostles themselves. In four years from his first appearance at Kingswood, twenty-five of these heroic men were commissioned by Wesley in different parts of England. At the end of twenty-five years, the time when Methodism was introduced into America, there were not less than one hundred of them; while many others had, by hard work, persecution, or privation, been hurried to heaven.

There was *Alexander Coates*, one of the first of the lay preachers. He was for twenty-five years an earnest and clear witness of the power of Christ to save, and died with a vision of the better land before him.

John Haime was another. He was for some time in the army. By his holy life, fervent praying, and zealous preaching, he was the means of the conversion of many of the soldiers. Some of these became preachers also. He left the army of his country, but remained a true soldier of the cross for more than forty years. He continued to preach "as long as he was able to speak, and longer than he could stand without support." His dying testimony was, "When my soul departs from this body, a convoy of angels will conduct me to the paradise of God."

The army in Flanders furnished another notable itinerant, *Sampson Staniforth.* He had been a leader in wickedness among his companions in arms. The change produced by his conversion was so great that it affected a number of his immediate comrades, who were also converted. He was soon distinguished as a powerful preacher in the army. When he returned to England, he entered the ranks of the itinerants, and continued in them for near fifty years. He was a mighty man, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and "much people were added to the Lord."

Christopher Hopper was another of Wesley's "trained band." He travelled extensively in England, Wales, and Ireland, facing mobs, preaching Christ, and forming societies. He left the fruits of his apostleship in every place to which he came.

The army in Ireland produced *Duncan Wright*, to increase the number of Wesley's aids. He was by birth a Scotchman. After his conversion, he was too zealous in his master's cause for the comfort of his chief officer, who managed to have him released from the army. This gave him a wider field for his gifts. For thirty years he worked as a man who loved the work, and then died in it, but not weary of it.

These men and their compeers were a wonderful band. They were not such as the world is accustomed to place high on its roll of honor. But history can furnish none truer to the great mission they were called to fill, or who performed a better part in the reformation of their fellow-men, — none more needed for the times in which they lived. Their works do follow them. Their courage knew nothing of fear. Their love for souls burned brighter as it was fanned by exercise, and their faith embraced an unlimited efficacy in the atonement of Christ for the worst of men. To be obedient to every call of their Saviour became the habit of their lives. Wesley was their leader; and they were the *first fruits, noble types, of his devoted helpers.*

CHAPTER IV.

HOW WESLEYAN METHODISM WAS CONSTRUCTED.

"In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord."

WE have already considered what may be called the internal or spiritual force of Methodism. We now propose to inquire, what was its original outward or organic structure, and why it took the form that it did. We have a particular interest in this inquiry, because American Methodism was mainly a reproduction of English Methodism. It could not have been otherwise. Its founders here were emigrants, who had left the parent land as members, or local preachers, of the Methodist family at home; or were itinerants, sent directly by Wesley to organize societies in this country. For some years these societies were considered a part of the English Wesleyan body; and, naturally, all the peculiarities or characteristics of the original stock would appear in its branch.

If we institute a comparison between the "economy" of Methodism, as its organization is sometimes called, for the first twenty-five years of its existence, and Methodism as it is at the present day, we shall find that in that brief time it had incorporated in itself nearly all

the fundamental features of its present system. A few changes have transpired; some extensions or modifications have been made, as the increased resources of the denomination have demanded, to conform it to the characteristics of present society. But, in the general features of this economy, the Methodism of to-day is much the same as that of England in 1766.

The ecclesiastical structure of Methodism is peculiar. In some respects it simply differs from, and in others its features are apparently the opposite of, those of other churches. Hence it has been the subject of free, and sometimes of severe, criticisms. By some it has been called arbitrary in its rule, and oppressive on its members, — at variance with their individual rights. Others have conceded that it was a good temporary "institute," well adapted, as an expedient to meet an emergency, at the time of its introduction, but with an inherent unfitness for permanence, and unworthy the name of a true church system.

Its friends regard it, and we think with good reason, as wisely, perhaps divinely appointed, with all the materials and forms to develop and strengthen itself, and to conserve the spiritual interests of its members. They think it has the best provisions for unlimited expansion, and that it embodies all the qualities essential to a real church of God.

The attacks made upon the Methodistic economy have usually come from those who were either ignorant of its history and form; or who have shown that they looked at it from some hostile position; or who have mistaken its chief design, — to promote the piety of its members, and do the work of spreading scriptural holiness in the world.

The ignorance of many men who are presumed to be well informed on all important subjects — their ignorance respecting the system and policy of the Methodist Church — is often very surprising. This seems not less strange, considering that it is the church that has had such a controlling influence in forming the character of this nation. We will give one instance to illustrate our assertion: —

More than twenty years ago, an eminent lawyer of our Empire State, and since then a chief justice of the Supreme Court of the State, had a case in court, involving the legal settlement of title to some Methodist Church property. It was necessary that he should be posted respecting the economy of the church, of which he was wholly ignorant. He sought the needed information from a Methodist layman of his acquaintance. Bishop Hedding happened to be in the city at the time, and was introduced to the lawyer to instruct him. For an hour or more, the good bishop expounded to him the whole theory of the Methodist polity. When he had finished, the lawyer said to him in substance, "I thank you, Bishop Hedding, for giving me this interview, and for your clear and able exposition of your church system. But I want also to confess, that I am ashamed for having allowed myself to remain so profoundly ignorant of what I now conceive to be the wisest and best church organization in the world." It would be well if all his brethren of the law, and all others, too, who assume to be learned, would become better acquainted with the economy and history of Methodism.

But the objections to the organism of Methodism come mostly from those who fail to see its true nature as a system for religious men, — for those who, "having

the form, are seeking the power of godliness." These objectors estimate its value rather as a policy to rule the men of the world. They judge of its value, solely by its analogy to institutions that have a worldly end to secure.

There were two objects in view in the mind of John Wesley, in adopting or approving the regulations that were to govern his "Societies." They were, first, how shall those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus be best aided in their desires? And, next, how can they best induce others to unite with them in the same desire? To attain these ends were all in all to him.

Referring to the charge often made against him, of irregularity, he said emphatically, "Church or no church, we must save souls." It was not whether his regulations were formed like those regulating merely human organizations, or whether they would be popularized by flattering the passions, the prejudices, or the ambition of men. Our judgment of the worth of the Methodist economy must be made from his standpoint. From it, what has the history of Methodism proved? Plainly that no ecclesiastical system has furnished better appliances to aid men to live holy; and none has been more successful in converting men from sin to holiness.

By Wesley's test of what Methodism should be, we are to fear or hope for its future. If ever the time comes when the conditions of its "General Rules" become only nominal, or are so changed that unconverted men may find easy access to its communion; if it shall ever happen that men seek to make the church a *strong establishment*, rather than a holy people; and if its counsels, superior or inferior, shall ever be directed by a worldly-wise policy rather than to subserve the sanctification of its mem-

bers, there is no church organization in existence that has in it such elements of weakness, division, and ruin as the Methodist Church. Its grand system of centralized power, and the authority it gives to individuals for the supervision and direction of both ministers and members, perverted, would be like aroused Samsons in the temple of the Philistines,—terrible instruments for its own destruction. That which is ordained, with a godly membership, to be a savour of life unto life, would become, with an ungodly, a savour of death unto death.

Men have entertained diverse opinions in respect to organic Methodism. There are those who consider it as entirely the product of Wesley's genius, combining his ingenuity to invent, or his practical talent to adopt the measures that were best fitted to accomplish a given end. They give the whole glory of Methodism to John Wesley. Others consider it, in whole and in part, a divinely constructed system; the pattern made and ordained in heaven, and Wesley and his assistants free to work it out, perhaps not always wittingly, if willingly.

Both of these extreme opinions are erroneous. Methodism is indeed the child of Providence. But this does not imply that its instruments had no inventive part in its establishment. Some of its features are clearly the result of Wesley's genius; but this does not imply that God did not intervene to bring about the peculiar circumstances that suggested the invention. In some instances it is clear that others, and not Wesley chiefly, were the authors of the best peculiarities of Methodism. The plan of the Societies is from an existing Moravian custom. God thrust forth the first lay preacher, without Wesley's knowledge or favor. The crude plan of class-meetings was first suggested by a humble

member of one of the societies. But this is Wesley's praise, that when some measure was suggested to him that he believed would aid in fulfilling the mission of his life, and be instrumental in helping to save men, though it was without the authority of usage, or was proposed to him by the lowliest of his members, he had both the wisdom and the grace heartily and promptly to approve and adopt it; and thus his whole system became an illustration of men working out, while God worked in and with them, their salvation.

Field-preaching was the first *new measure* of Methodism. We have already given an account of its introduction at Bristol and Kingswood. Wesley little dreamed, when he overcame his prejudices, and, as he says, "submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation," that he was "establishing a precedent," to become common with himself and his co-laborers and successors, and that should be attended with such remarkable success. He did not think that he was establishing a rule of action for future Methodist history,—a principle rather,—that, wherever the people could be convened to hear the Word, in private houses or in the market-places, by the wayside or in the fields, in barns or in the streets, anywhere and everywhere that men would gather to hear the gospel, was a place consecrated by the work, and a proper one for a Methodist minister to open his commission. What was at first reluctantly adopted as a necessity, has thousands of times since been joyfully embraced as a providential opportunity.

It can hardly be said that field-preaching is an essential part of Methodist economy; but it is a very important part of Methodist history. It gave access to thou-

sands, that could not have been obtained in any other way; and, in less than a quarter of a century, there was hardly a town in England, Scotland, Wales, or Ireland but had its out-door spot, consecrated by the itinerants, by the message of the gospel, and by prayer and the songs of praise.

There were many practical advantages in this method of preaching, above the regular and formal ministrations in the churches. At that time, great numbers of the people never visited the churches, and would have been awkward inside of them. But they would be unembarrassed, and would readily assemble, in the extemporized crowd. The novelty of the thing would induce them to attend. True, it brought together a heterogeneous mass, and often exposed the preacher to disturbance and insult. But what of this, if it only gave him an opportunity to present Christ, and interest his hearers in their salvation? It was peculiarly adapted to give direct access to the poor and vile, to whom the mission of Methodism seemed especially to be directed.

Field-preaching furnished a place of worship always available. It did not require the permission of bishops, rectors, or curates. Most of all, it was well adapted to the pioneer work of evangelism; and, without it, Methodism would hardly have found a permanent influence in many places in England or America. It was, too, an entering wedge of independence of the Established Church.

The *first* feature of organic Methodism was the formation of what Wesley called the "United Societies." The particular rules to regulate these societies are to be credited to Wesley; but the origin of the societies can hardly be said to belong to him. They were taken from the Moravians. There were a number of them in Lon-

don before he began to preach. Indeed, it was while he was assembled in one of them, in Aldersgate Street, that he was converted. But these Moravian assemblies were not as select as he thought they ought to be. They were more like the "inquiry meetings" of later times than a company of professed believers, in a compact of Christian fellowship. He found in them the general plan of mutual assistance, and modified them into a system of Christian discipleship.

Soon after Wesley began field-preaching in Bristol and Kingswood, a few persons, by his advice, met together in these places for mutual religious counsel and prayer. These little bands, for there were several of them, were soon united in one society, or company. But there is no evidence that this society was held together by any particular covenant or disciplinary bond. There was no specific condition for admission to it, or for exclusion from it. A few months later, Wesley formed in London what he called the "United Society." It was under his immediate advice and supervision. He gives us an account of its origin: "In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did one or two more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together,—which from henceforth they did every week,—namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), I gave those advices from time to

time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

"This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a society is no other than a company of men, having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness; united to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

The discerning mind of Wesley soon saw that the permanence and harmony of his societies required that particular regulations should be adopted by them, especially having respect to the terms on which persons should be received in them, to the manner of life of the members, and how the persistently unruly might be excluded them. He therefore prepared, in consultation with his brother, a specific code for the government of the societies. These he called "The General Rules of the United Societies." He was led to do this, evidently from some irregularities or improprieties that he saw existing among the companies already formed. These rules were a real constitution, and were the true foundation of organic Methodism. The society in London may properly be called the First Methodist Church. These rules, with scarcely any change, have been the common bond of agreement and alliance of Methodist churches throughout the world. They have been the subject of severe animadversion and praise.

We think they were devised by a sound philosophy, and that they exhibit the wisdom of their author. No better evidence of their excellence can be asked than the wonderful and beneficial results that have followed their adoption.

Unlike the usual conditions of membership in most churches, they required no dogmatic theological tests. They referred wholly to the qualifications of Christian experience, and determined this by its manifestation in a godly life. Their chief virtue was in teaching the members of the societies to say, "If thy heart be as my heart, give me thy hand." They were the same for every society, and therefore produced uniformity. They were very properly called "Rules for the *United* Societies," and gave to all the branches the spirit of fraternity. They made them all *connectional*, — a spirit that inheres to Methodism everywhere. They cultivated a common attachment to each other, both of members and of societies. Though undesigned by their author, they imparted a spirit of independence to their subjects, and loosened the cords of alliance with the Established Church.

It was natural that such distinct and separate companies should spring out of Wesley's evangelical labors. Persons who were seriously affected by his preaching would seek from him further and more intimate instruction, and it was quite as natural that he should endeavor to aid them in their desires. But how could it be done? Neither he nor his converts could have much confidence in the ability or the disposition of the existing clergy, to aid the spiritual interests of these converts. Men who had excluded him from their churches, and denounced him as irregular and extravagant, because he preached a present salvation, would hardly be expected to sympathize with those who professed to be anxious to follow his teachings. The anxious ones would be very reluctant to submit themselves to the pastoral watch-care of such men. Wesley himself saw, that, if

they did, it would be more like committing the sheep to the care of wolves than to true and devoted shepherds. He saw that he must feed and fold them himself.

It was like him to do this. He seemed to have a *special gift* to conserve the fruit of his labors. In this, his distinguishing trait, he was the very contrast of Whitefield. It made him without a superior as a leader and administrator. When he had sowed good seed, and it began to spring up, he had no thought of leaving it to be trodden down and destroyed by the careless and profane.

Whether the plan of "societies" was original with Wesley is not a matter of much moment. The credit of giving them rules to make them effective and permanent organizations for religious ends is certainly due to him.

The next step toward giving coherence and independence to the small Wesleyan companies was the *erection of chapels*, — a step that must have been foreseen by Wesley, if his field-preaching proved a success.

Out-of-door preaching, however necessary as an expedient to reach the multitude, or a necessity when excluded from the churches, would be convenient in fair and mild weather; but it would be impracticable in stormy and cold. The bands, prayer-meetings, and love-feasts, too, would require a more protected and social opportunity for their services than on the hillside and open street.

Almost immediately after the formation of his "bands" in Bristol, Wesley began the erection of a chapel. Whether it was the simple plainness of its structure, or to avoid all appearance of dissent from, or independence of, the Establishment, he was careful to call

it a "*chapel*,"—not a *church*. Before this one was completed, he leased an old foundry in London, and fitted it, and opened it, for Methodist service. Very soon afterward, he had others built,—in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, York, Hull, and Birmingham. These edifices were plain, and designed for use rather than ornament. The pecuniary condition of the members of his societies could have provided no others. They were in keeping with the social status of the people who used them, and in such plain buildings they would be most at home.

The erection of chapels was a necessity as well as a convenience. Had the Wesleys not been excluded from the churches, their occupancy would have been only by courtesy, and their frequent and general use impossible. They would have imposed restraints and forms inconsistent with the freedom and social nature of Methodist service. They would have shut out the chief ministers of the new sect,—the great company of unordained lay-preachers. The building of chapels, where the worshippers would not be "strangers and foreigners," the like of which, in every variety of size and architecture, are now scattered everywhere in Christendom, was a further progress in the young Wesleyan communities towards denominational unity and independence.

"Societies" were real church organizations: "classes" were now introduced as a supervisory provision for the membership. *Supervision*, not *surveillance*, runs through the whole economy of Methodism. Wesley desired to do more than gather the lost sheep into a fold; he would institute a proper pastoral care of them, and have every one of them fed and protected. How to do this was a matter of much anxiety to him. He was led by accident, or, more properly, by Providence, into a way of

doing it. The chapel in Bristol was in debt, and Wesley held a conference with its members on the means of paying it. At this conference one of them said, "Let every member of the society give a penny a week till all is paid." — "But," said another, "many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it." — "Then," said the first, "put eleven of the poorest with me; and, if they can give any thing, well. I will call on them weekly; and, if they can give nothing, I will give for them, as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbors weekly, receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." The plan was adopted. But soon some of these collectors informed Wesley that they found members whose lives were disorderly. He then requested them to make particular inquiry into the religious walk and experience of their contributors. The result was, that many of the unfaithful were reformed, and others were excluded from the society. These leaders, as they came to be called, visited at first their members at their houses. But this had disadvantages; and in some cases it was impracticable. The members were then requested to meet together once a week, and thenceforth the work of spiritual supervision was more systematic and thorough. These weekly class-meetings were chiefly devoted to inquiry into the spiritual state of their members, and for prayer for each other and for praise.

Wesley says of them, "It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to 'bear one another's burdens,' and naturally to 'care for each other.'

As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And, 'speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things who is the head, even Christ.'"

The "classes," which at first were conceived for a simple financial purpose, became an important means to protect and encourage the spiritual life of the church.

They supplied a good provision for a "sub-pastorate." From the nature of their work, the chief pastors — the itinerants — could be but a short time at once in any place. The class-leaders supplied their lack of service. These men were chosen for the service on account of their deep knowledge in divine things, their consistent lives, and their good, practical common sense. They have been a leading agency in preserving the integrity and the piety of Methodism. No other prominent church, of our knowledge, has such a system of faithful watchfulness over, and assistance to, its members; what must be the good results of *fifty thousand* weekly class-meetings in the compass of the Methodist Church!

The keen eye of Wesley soon saw that it would be well to add to the separate class-meeting a further provision, that should occasionally bring all the members of a society together for a purpose similar to that of the class. If fellowship and love were cultivated in a class, it was important to make it common in the society, by a kind of general class. He provided for this by what he called the *Love-Feasts*, after the ancient *agapæ*. To have a symbol of their mutual love and fellowship, he appointed that each one present should partake of a small piece of bread and a drink of water.

The large numbers present at a love-feast, which is usually held once in three months, would not allow of personal conversation with each; but each one could speak briefly of his religious state, and the testimony of such a variety of witnesses, often given with tears of joy, and mingled with songs of devout thanksgiving, usually distinguished these occasions as seasons of ecstasy and praise. These love-feasts have been continued, and form an important part in the social life of the church. They are its spiritual festivals. "At these love-feasts," says Wesley, "our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with 'the meat which perisheth,' but with 'that which endureth to everlasting life.'"

Wesley had a strong predilection to whatever was Moravian. Hence, among the first measures he adopted, to aid those attached to him, were the Moravian "bands." They consisted each of only *four* or *five* persons, who were permitted and required to be to each other "*severe in love.*" With great plainness of speech they were to tell each other "all that was in their hearts," — as well what they thought of one another that was wrong, as all that each thought was wrong in himself. They were not essential to Methodism, and were found, after several years, to be *hyper-supervisional*, and have long since fallen into disuse.

John Wesley had great versatility, and a genius to convert and use whatever he found in society to the advancement of true religion. We have seen how he did this in giving to the class, at first devised to facilitate a financial scheme, a decidedly religious purpose. He did the same thing in the adaption of popular airs

to sacred hymns. He said the "Devil had too long had the best tunes." These tunes being already familiar with the people, they had only to learn the words, and they could sing without a teacher.

Another instance of his talent in turning all things to good account was his introduction of the *watch-night.* Though not a corporate, it has been a good auxiliary, part of Methodism.

It had long been a custom, before the introduction of Methodism in Kingswood, for the wicked colliers to spend the last night of the year in revelry and drunkenness. As sin abounded in them, grace now much more abounded; and the converted miners spent the New-Year's Eve to midnight in mutual exhortation, singing, and prayer. Some fastidious ones complained of this practice to Wesley, and advised him to stop it. "But," he says, "I rather believed it might be made of more general use. So I sent them word that I designed to watch with them on the Friday nearest the full moon, that we might have light thither and back again. I gave notice of this the Sunday before. On Friday, abundance of people came. I began preaching between eight and nine; and we continued till a little beyond the noon of night, singing, praying, and praising God. We have continued to do this once a month ever since,—in Bristol, London, and Newcastle, as well as Kingswood; and exceeding great are the blessings we have found therein."

The monthly watch-night was observed for many years. It then fell into disuse. But the annual one, on the eve of the new year, has been continued, and is now very generally held throughout the length and breadth of Methodism. There is a solemn impressiveness in the

custom of passing from the old year to the new in silent, covenanting prayer.

Methodism gave a new spirit to, if it was not the origin of, the modern *social prayer meetings*. There is not much difference in the manner in which these are now held by different evangelical churches. But it must be confessed that much of the life, freedom, and zeal that pervades them now, is attributable to the influence of Methodistic practice. The introduction of social prayer in Methodism cannot be given, except that it was always a part of Methodist worship. The formal and read prayers of the Church were too general, or not definite enough, for souls fired with the love of God, or earnestly groaning to be saved. Few of them were made for such cases, nor could they meet the variety of the wants presented. The utterance of petitions with "groanings that could not be uttered," found little correspondence in words that had no groanings. They could be more easily uttered by the extempore supplications of the burdened heart. What there was of prayer in the dissenting churches wanted the fervent, social element to suit the Methodist spirit. It was also usually conducted by ministers and church officers, and did not answer the desire for reciprocity that moved loving hearts to pray one for another. Most of those awakened to pray by the teachings of the itinerants did not know the prayers of the book. They were poor, and had never learned. The heart supplied their lack, and was the natural hand-book of supplications. The penitent needed no printed form to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" The want was father to the petition.

The Methodists have always been famous in prayer,

— both for the love and practice of it. They rarely met or separated without prayer. By much secret prayer, they were schooled to the work of praying. All of them prayed, — not only the men, but the women. Their language was often simple and plain. To the critic it might appear weak and incoherent; but they preferred the irrepressible voice of the heart to the studied utterance of unfelt words.

Social prayer has been to Methodism a dispensation of power. It may be questioned whether there have not been more persons awakened, surely more converted, by Methodist praying than by preaching. It has been the right arm of its strength.

We have already written, in the preceding chapter, of the introduction of what was called the "*Lay Ministry.*" We only refer to it now to make up the list of "innovations" that pertain to Methodism. To consent to it was, without doubt, the hardest struggle John Wesley ever had with his High Church prejudices. It took him years to obtain a complete victory. What he said submissively at first, when he heard Maxwell preach, — "It is the Lord; let him do as seemeth him good," — was truly, though unconsciously, prophetical. It proved to be the Lord indeed. The use of lay-preachers, having every function of Christ's anointed ministry except that which human prejudice withheld from them, — the authority to administer the sacraments, — was to Methodism like the main arteries of the body, giving life and energy to all the workings of the system. Though the greatest "stone of stumbling" to the advocates of prelatical authority, it effectually widened the breach between the new sect and the Establishment.

That which completed the demonstrative "irregu-

larity" of Methodism was the *itinerancy* of its ministers. The introduction of this feature of its economy was a great *novelty*, as well as irregularity. It had no precedent except in the days of the primitive Church. It came in direct collision with the pretentious claims to parish lines and the pre-emptive authority of the local and settled ministry, and awoke its bitterest hostility. Before these itinerants, there were no evangelists in the apostolic sense. The commission to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," found no obedient respondents. The example of the primitive ministers, "going everywhere preaching the word," found no hearty imitators.

Itinerancy began with Methodism itself. The Wesleys and Whitefield were the first and best exponents of its spirit and practice. Every day they widened the area of their circuits, and extended the bounds of their parishes to "regions beyond." They travelled rapidly; and preaching two or three times a day, often not twice in the same place at one visit, their voices were soon heard through the length and breadth of the land. Such examples of industry, locomotion, and zeal had not been known since the days of the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Wesley's co-laborers and helpers were fully imbued with his spirit, and rivalled him in itinerant diligence. They were required to be "travelling preachers:" though their assigned duties were to given circuits, these were often large enough to embrace a whole county, and they were changed to others, at farthest, every two years. Thus it was a *general* itinerancy. It had many advantages. It gave a freshness to the preaching, and excited interest in the hearers. Wesley was so im-

pressed with its importance that he said he "believed he should preach himself and his congregation asleep, were he to stay in one place an entire year."

After fifty years' practice and observation, Wesley had not changed his opinion. In the famous "Deed of Settlement," by which he conveyed to the legal hundred of the Conference his entire control of the churches, and the appointment of the preachers to their churches, he made it an irrevocable condition of the "Deed," that none of the preachers should remain more than three years in one place.

The itinerant system was well adapted to diffuse the Word. It cultivated the pioneer spirit. It made available every variety of gift in the ministry. It gave unity and confederation to the entire sect. Every preacher felt that he had a common interest in every society, and every member felt that he had a common claim on every preacher. It gave a homogeneous character to the widely scattered societies, and a homogeneous spirit to the whole ministry. As the running stream has life and freshness, more than the quiet or settled pond, so a ministry of itinerants gave vigor and independence to its teaching and administration. It has continued unimpaired to the present; and the chivalric itinerancy of Methodism has made it the living church of Protestantism. Long live the itinerancy!

It was a maxim with Wesley, "never to cross a bridge until he came to it." He did not anticipate or magnify difficulties that might happen. Had he done so, it is probable that few, if any, of the peculiarities of his system would have been adopted. He trusted in God, and did the duty of the day as the day came. He

found that grace and obedience combined provided for the emergencies of the hour.

Another emergency arose. In four years he had sent out a quarter of a hundred of itinerants, and they were moving to and fro in every part of the kingdom. How should they be so appointed as to co-operate with each other, and work most effectively and harmoniously? How should they be so arranged that they might comprehend all the societies in their pastoral care? and, not least, how designated in their fields, that they might extend their labors to the destitute and unsaved beyond them? He devised a way to meet these ends, and called a council of some of his preachers that could conveniently attend. In 1744 he held his first Conference. There were ten present. It was the beginning of an organized method to supervise the character and work of the Methodist ministry. The Conference was thenceforth to be an institution. There were many advantages from this arrangement. It was well for the itinerants to know each other. They often heard of each other's toils and persecutions and successes: it would do them good to meet and take counsel together. It would be inspiration and encouragement for their future work. It would help them to understand each other's minds, and to speak the same thing and to walk by the same rule.

These itinerants had been brought forth from every variety of place in humble life. Though zealously devoted to preaching Christ, they were generally uneducated men, and full of enthusiasm. It would be natural that sometimes their experience and administration should have a sprinkling of fanaticism. But few of them had been theoretically trained in the

doctrines of Christianity, and most of them would be in danger of embracing errors in doctrine. To save them from such perils, Wesley called his Conference. The four days of its session were chiefly devoted to answering the questions: What shall we teach? How shall we teach? How shall we live? and What shall be our administration over the societies? As might be anticipated from the men composing this company, there was great unanimity in the answers they gave these questions. Sanctification, with its concomitants, should be the themes of their preaching. They resolved to be direct in their style of address, and in urging sinners to repent, and in offering Christ as a present and sufficient Saviour. They enjoined on each other a strictly holy life; and the "rules" were to be faithfully enforced in all the societies. Not a small portion of their time was spent in prayer with and for each other. The few that were present went forth from this first Conference girded anew for conflicts and victories in the battles of the itinerancy. No provision was made for future Conferences. The next year Wesley called another, and the precedent was established; and Methodism incorporated into its system the *Annual Conference*, — a body partly judicial and partly executive, having a general supervision of the characters of its members, and devising measures to promote the interests of the churches within its limits. We shall have occasion frequently to see in these pages the efficiency of this clerical association in contributing to the spread and strength of Methodism.

But one more peculiarity of the system remains to be noticed. It is the plan adopted for the *material support of the itinerants*. There were others, incidentally

auxiliary; but they were not an essential part of the economy. Wesley began schools for the education of the poor and for the children of his ministers. He founded a dispensary in London to furnish medicines for the sick. He began the great work of giving a cheap religious literature to the people.

Methodism increased. The societies were multiplied. The itinerants became quite a host. But, for several years, nothing was done for their support. They had wrought, laboring with their hands by day, and preaching as they had opportunity. They would generally find among the loving people a generous hospitality to feed and lodge them. But they had other wants. These, and the wants of their families, would occasionally cause some of them to become local,— to care for their households. It was a serious evil, and the sagacious leader provided for the need. The class, that was at first originated to pay the debt of a church, was again employed in a financial mission. Each preacher received for himself and his family a stipulated sum, and each member paid his class-leader what he was willing to give for "raising supplies" for the preachers. It involved all the benefits of a loving, voluntary, habitual, and systematic support of the ministry. When we notice the financial system of Methodism, we shall say more about it. The philosophy of this financial phase of Methodism, in many particulars, has been the subject of admiration and wonder to all who have considered it.

All these peculiarities of Methodism — its field-preaching, societies, and chapels; its classes, love-feasts, and watch-nights; its lay-preaching, itinerancy, and Conferences; with a steady provision for the itinerants' sup-

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port — were in full working order within twenty-five years from the time when Wesley stood before the colliers of Kingswood, and proclaimed, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor." At the end of this time, there were about forty circuits, and nearly a hundred itinerants, with over twenty-five thousand members. Persecutions had not wholly ceased. Yet, in the chief places, the Methodists were permitted to worship unmolested under their own "vine and fig-tree:" its founders were respected, its preachers beloved, and its members walking together in the faith of the gospel. "The little one had become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation."

CHAPTER V.

WESLEYAN METHODISM TO THE PRESENT TIME.

"His leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

BEFORE we pass to devote our subsequent pages to American Methodism, we ought to take a kind of "bird's-eye view" of English Methodism for the last hundred years, or since the time that Embury preached his first sermon in New York. Such a view will show how consistently, persistently, and successfully the sons of Wesley followed up the great evangelical movement that he begun; and if not as rapidly, yet as surely, progressing to permanence and church establishment as the transplant in the American soil. We shall find them increasing their influence in the nation, and, though having to solve perplexing questions of ecclesiastical policy, meeting these questions with calmness and firmness, and adjusting them with sound wisdom and true Christian catholicity. We shall see the great Wesleyan body engaging in vigorous efforts to promote its own spiritual life, united with the noblest combinations for a diffusive evangelism throughout the world.

First, let us give a brief notice of Calvinistic Methodism.

Whitefield returned from America, in 1741, a decided, outspoken Calvinist. The news that he had embraced Calvinistic opinions reached England before him, and prepared a cool reception for him among Wesley's societies. Wesley, however, who cared less for dogmatic doctrines than for the new-life experience of those with whom he labored, would have continued to work harmoniously with his old associate. But Whitefield would not permit him to do so. He insisted on preaching his new belief, and even went so far as to denounce the Arminianism of Wesley. It resulted in a separation, and for a time the breach threatened to be permanent. Whitefield began to work independently. Through the aid of his Calvinistic friends, in the English Church and among the dissenters, he erected a "Tabernacle," not far from Wesley's "Foundry," in London, and began the organization of a new sect, that was subsequently known as Whitefield Methodists. He did not abate, however, his evangelical labors. His zeal, his eloquence, and his devoted piety secured him crowds of hearers, and he continued to itinerate through all parts of the kingdom.

We cannot say whether the separation of Whitefield from Wesley was a means of good to the cause of true religion; apparently it was. It gave him access to many holding Calvinistic sentiments, and he was instrumental in arousing these to a vigorous spiritual life. Wesley could not have reached them. The quickening of churchmen and dissenters who sympathized with Whitefield's views of doctrine, by his labors among them, rather favors the opinion, that, in being independent of Wesley, he was more useful, to a class at least, than if both of them had wrought together on the same line.

One thing is certain. Whitefield's natural dislike of strict rules — the very characteristic that unfitted him to found and preserve a sect — would have made him very unhandy in Wesley's systematic *régime*. He would hardly have been a strict observer, much less a good administrator, of discipline. It was therefore well that he "built over against his own house."

Whitefield Methodism would have become less distinguished than it did, but for the controlling influence and resources of another co-operating mind.

Among a number of distinguished ladies who had been converted in the beginning of Methodism was the Countess of Huntingdon. She moved in the first circles of the aristocracy, was quite wealthy, and devoted her wealth with a liberal hand to aid the new evangelical movement. She encouraged and assisted Wesley, especially in the employment of a lay ministry. But she was a Calvinist; and, when Whitefield separated from Wesley, she became his patron and his chief supporter. She had, however, a large catholic heart, and through her influence, chiefly, a reconciliation was effected between Wesley and Whitefield; and, though each followed the separate path that Providence seemed to indicate for him to pursue, they were thenceforward one in heart and in co-operation to the end of their lives.

This "elect" lady was eminently useful with some of her rank in society and of her own sex. While Methodism was gathering into its fold many of the humblest class, and the Foundry and Tabernacle resounded with the praises of the "common people," Lady Huntingdon gathered into a praying band a number of the "noble women" in another part of the metropolis.

She seemed to have no limit to the nobleness of her

plans, and to her liberality to encourage evangelical efforts. Her husband died in 1748, and after this she devoted her whole life to the cause of Christ. She sold her jewels, and dispensed with her liveried, aristocratic equipage, that she might have more means at her disposal for doing good. Whitefield's success called forth her zeal and liberality in building chapels. She opened a school, at great expense, for educating those who desired to enter the ministry. She became herself an itinerant, and, accompanied by her chaplains, visited various parts of England and Wales. Her mansion was opened for preaching, and Whitefield preached to many of the learned who resorted thither to hear him. She became the controlling spirit of the Calvinistic wing of Methodism.

She was strongly attached to the Established Church, and had built, or aided in building, over sixty chapels. But she was compelled to leave it. Toward the close of her long and useful life, she was driven, by the intolerance of some of the clergy, to declare herself on the side of dissent. They insisted on the control of her chapels; and, in order to save them to her chaplains, she availed herself of the "Toleration Act," and became "independent." This caused her great grief. But it was the only course for a conscientious woman, in her position, to pursue. In the sadness of her heart, she wrote, "I am to be cast out of the Church now, only for what I have been doing these forty years, — speaking and living for Jesus Christ." After more than fifty years in her Master's service, she died, saying, "My work is done: I have nothing to do but to go to my Father."

The Calvinistic Methodists of Great Britain at the

time of Lady Huntingdon's death, in 1791, were divided into three branches, — the Welch Calvinistic Methodists, the Whitefield Methodists, and the Lady Huntingdon Connection. The first of these continued to prosper, and, at present, embraces a large part of the religious population of Wales. The Whitefield Methodists, after the death of their leader, preserved denominational distinctness for a while, but the different societies soon became Congregationalists. Lady Huntingdon's chapels remain, and bear her name, but generally are ranked as "Independents." These last two divisions lacked the organized and systematic connectionalism that characterized the Wesleyan branch of Methodism, and the want of this hastened their disintegration. But Calvinistic Methodism accomplished a great and good work. That portion of the Established Church and the dissenters who agreed with its peculiar tenets, were greatly influenced by its evangelical spirit, and Calvinistic Methodism was a savor of life unto life to British Christianity.

Arminian Methodism differed from Calvinistic in more than its creed. It had for its leader a man qualified to unite all its parts in a healthy, preserving system, and who could rally around him all the agencies that contributed to give it strength. His eye took in at a glance all its combinations, and his genius dictated to him how to make each part most efficient. He was its centripetal force, drawing all to himself; its centrifugal came from the natural independence inspired by the teachings of the Divine Spirit, and these forces were remarkably well balanced. The whole system moved with great harmony, and each part in its respective sphere. Amidst all the persecutions it endured, and the vain

attempts made to divide it, the Arminian section of Methodism made steady progress, and there was hardly a year for half a century when it did not report an increase of both members and itinerants. The temporary effect of the separation of Whitefield was hardly felt on Wesley's societies. It was only like a sudden wind that threatened the ship, and made it careen to the blast; but which, like the wind, tested the strength of the craft, and urged it on more rapidly in its course. The vigor of the faith, and the activity in building, of Arminian Methodism were quickened, rather than retarded, by Whitefield's separation.

Each successive year called out additional lay preachers, and opened new circuits. There was a constant increase in the members, and a greater increase in their influence in the communities. Men of position, in both Church and State, began to regard the Methodist movement with greater interest, and some of them to give it their favor and patronage. In all the principal towns of the kingdom, large and powerful societies were growing up, and the smaller rural places were rejoicing in the itinerants' pastorate. Chapels were built all over the land, — some of them large and capacious, and all of them crowded with regular and devout worshippers. Methodism was no longer regarded as the experiment of a few evangelists, travelling here and there over the country, without a habitation or a name, but as the organization of a wide-spreading people, with establishment and place from Land's End to the Tweed, with a strong hold on Ireland, and considerable influence in both Wales and Scotland. It had set a firm root in the soil, and was throwing out its branches, and bearing abundant fruit.

The causes that united to give success to Methodism were various. The chief one was that it appeared to be manifestly the work of God. There was a power that accompanied the Word that could not be resisted. The reformations in the characters and lives of its converts appeared like miracles. It was elevating the moral and social state of the entire humbler portion of the populace. The wilderness and solitary places were beginning to blossom as the rose.

The lay preachers were every year more and more accredited as a divinely appointed ministry; and the respect and attention shown them increased their influence with, and their access to, the people.

Charles Wesley had given to the growing connection a collection of devotional lyrics, embracing the great doctrines of evangelical Christianity, and descriptive of all the stages of Christian experience. These hymns formed a spiritual bond in the devotions of the societies, and they were sung with lusty voices and devout hearts by thousands of worshippers, in chapels and private dwellings, in the fields and workshops and mines. They were the spiritual liturgy of the sect.

John Wesley, besides having the care of all the churches, and moving among them with an incessant presence, had prepared and printed, and scattered broadcast among the people, a cheap, attractive religious literature. He there spoke to them on every conceivable topic that would interest and profit them, whether to instruct the ignorant, warn the ungodly, or edify and comfort believers. His cheap literature was another special ministry to the people.

The whole Methodistic system became more and more effective by its use, from the Annual Conference

to the small class, or band, meetings, — like a "wheel within a wheel," — preserving a healthful and invigorating supervision of the whole connection.

Better provision was made also, after some years, for the support of the itinerant preachers, and they were able to give their undivided time to the work of the ministry. There was raised up a large auxiliary force of local preachers, — a kind of subordinate ministry; a class of men peculiar to Methodism, who, having a fixed place of residence and secular business, gave themselves, as their time allowed, to the ministry of the word. These men were hardly less useful than the itinerants themselves.

But Wesleyan Methodism, with its rapid growth, was not without its internal perils. The hostility and persecution it met from the world, and the opposition made to it from most of the established churches, could not impede its progress. There was danger to arise within itself.

The first serious disturbance in the harmony of the Wesleyan body came from the demand of many of the lay preachers for authority to administer the sacraments. Hitherto this authority had been denied them. The ordained ministers of the Establishment who were in sympathy and associated with Methodism were the only ones that had performed this work for the societies. As these were few, the members were mostly dependent for the sacraments on the parish clergy, many of whom were immoral men, and not unfrequently the most violent persecutors of the Methodists. The people would not submit pleasantly to receive the sacraments from their hands. The lay preachers, too, who had given such good proof of their ministry, could not

see why the right of administration should be denied them. Some of these were among the most talented and influential of the itinerants. The clamor of the people, and the demand of the preachers, that they should no longer be dependent for the sacraments on a separate administration, appeared to reach a crisis in 1755.

It was evident that John Wesley sympathized with the desire of the preachers and people, and was strongly inclined to gratify it. But Charles Wesley was an inveterate High-Churchman, and he resisted it with obstinate pertinacity. A dangerous storm threatened the hitherto united and prosperous body. Great anxiety was felt for the issue.

The Conference of 1755 was to decide the great question, and its interest brought together all the preachers that could attend. The question necessarily involved a separation from the Church. It was calmly and earnestly debated for several days. No question of such practical importance had ever engaged the attention of Conference, and none was ever considered with a nobler spirit. The advocates of the right of ordination urged their claim with strong arguments. Their opponents, holding to the superior authority of the Church, were firmly determined not to yield. Wesley himself confessed that he could not answer the arguments of its advocates. When they consented to waive their rights, and it was decided, with great unanimity, that, "whether it was lawful or not to separate from the Church, it was no way expedient," he said, "When I reflected on their answer, I admired their spirit and was ashamed of my own."

This was virtually the settlement of the question of

separation from the Church for many years, — whether wisely or unwisely we cannot say. It probably would not have been so decided but for Charles Wesley's determined opposition to the change proposed, assisted by some ordained clergy for whose opinions John Wesley had great respect. He, too, had fears that the controversy that would arise from separation would distract the attention of the preachers from their great work. "Church or no church," he says, "we must attend to the work of saving souls."

We shall scarcely find a better illustration of Christian magnanimity and forbearance than was given by the conduct of the men who advocated separation. Christian men may cheerfully peril their lives and reputations to do good, or to defend the truth, who will not consent to be bound, even for peace' sake, by restrictions that limit them in the use of a right that they believe to be given them of God, and essential to the health and growth of the body of Christ. Yet they submitted. Perhaps it was more than they ought to have done.

The decision of the vexing question did not disaffect the preachers one toward another, or restrain their zeal in their great life-work. They rather gave themselves anew to it, and more than ever sought to bring men to the knowledge of Christ. Occasionally, for several years, there would be a lay preacher who would dissent from the decision of the Conference to abide by the Church, and would become "independent." But the instances were very few.

Nothing — aside from the prosecution of its wonderful evangelical work — transpired in the Wesleyan body for the next fifteen years. The great revival continued.

In some places it was so remarkable that its effects seemed like "a nation born in a day." New fields were occupied. The old societies were generally prosperous, and their numbers increased. Wesley called for men and means to assist the newly organized band of Methodists on the American continent. Though hasting to three score and ten, he did not abate his zeal, his travels, or his preaching. "The churches had rest, and were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

Beginning with 1770, and continuing for more than six years in the hot contest, Methodism was to be further proved by a vehement doctrinal controversy. It had struggled successfully with persecutions from the ungodly world and from the pretentious and formal Church of England, and had gained advantage in every conflict. How would it be when the conflict became domestic, and Methodist was arrayed against Methodist? The famous controversy between the Calvinistic and Arminian branches of Methodism made the next eventful and decisive period in Methodist history.

Between Wesley and his preachers there had always been great harmony in respect to Christian doctrines. These were freely discussed at his Conferences, and the minutes of these annual assemblages were the standards of their creed, as well as the discipline or rules for their government. In fact, the whole body of preachers had been so intent on their great mission of "saving souls" that they had little disposition or time to engage in purely doctrinal discussions. A free, full, and present salvation, through Christ alone, was the beginning and end of their thoughts and their work. They were so absorbed in their "one business," that, to 1770, both

Calvinistic and Arminian Methodism had cultivated a fraternal and co-operating spirit. Each had wrought harmoniously in its own separate organization.

A minute was introduced in the proceedings of the Wesleyan Conference this year, hinting to the fact that they had leaned too much toward Calvinism, and alleging wherein they had done it. That which gave particular offence to the Calvinistic party was the statement respecting salvation by works,—"not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition." It was understood by that party as questioning the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, and immediately Wesley's thesis was assailed with great violence, and often with not a little temper.

The real difference between the parties was a logical one between Calvinism and Arminianism. They both held that faith was the great condition of salvation. Wesley regarded obedience to the divine command an evidence of faith, and that it thus became a necessary condition of continuance in a justified state. The Calvinists did not so regard it; at least, not so strictly as to account it a condition. The controversy ultimately took a wider range, but with this difference it began. Like most disputations on theological subjects, it was contested with great warmth, and sometimes mixed up with objectionable personalities.

We do not propose to enter into the details of this theological strife. The Calvinistic branch had among its numbers several eminent and zealous men, and nearly all of them girded themselves for the fight. On the other side, Wesley took comparatively little part in the dispute, — only so much as seemed necessary to vindicate his principles, and as his position required.

For more than thirty years the burden of his sermons and his writings had been salvation by faith in Christ, and he knew that only prejudice or jealousy would attempt to impeach his orthodoxy on this fundamental doctrine. He had felt, however, the Antinomian tendency of Calvinism in respect to good works, and to this his minute of the Conference referred. Providence raised up another to be his defender, and more than a match for all his assailants. John Fletcher, of Madely, was the Arminian David. His writings, familiarly known as "checks," issued in successive numbers, as the progress of the controversy required, were all that were needed to vindicate the Wesleyan side. They have continued to this day,— an irrefutable defence and exposition of Arminian Methodism. The effect of their publication has been to make the doctrines that distinguish Arminianism from Calvinism thoroughly understood; to give to every Methodist minister or layman a full armor, defensive and offensive, of its scriptural proofs; and to make them one in their belief of its truth throughout the world.

This exciting controversy, that so interested both branches of the Methodist family, did not embarrass or hinder the revival spirit in the Wesleyan part. It seemed to have a quickening influence upon it. Wesley, who was now nearly threescore and ten, and had reached that period of life when most men have to suspend effective service, held steadily to his great itinerant work. He appears to have given himself, if possible, to greater activity than ever. He adopted the language of Nehemiah, and, when invited to the field of theological disputation, he replied, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come down."

The result of this doctrinal contest was at least two-fold. First, it manifestly deadened the zeal of the leaders of the Calvinistic party in their earnestness in evangelical labor, and put them in "a frame of mind" more readily to yield to the temptations of independency or of the Establishment. Secondly, it wrought such modifications in the severe statements of Calvinistic doctrines, and had such a mollifying influence on the minds of most of its advocates, that Calvinism began at once to change its doctrinal technicalities, and to diminish its stern and unyielding declarations of decretal predestination. It has now come to be a doctrine written more in unstudied creeds than bluntly defended from the pulpit.

The relations of Wesley to his societies and preachers were peculiar, and without precedent. He was to them a father and protector. He held also an authority hardly less than military in its exactions. The extraordinary qualities of the man fitted him to discharge these functions with honor to himself and with profit to them. They gave the most cheerful compliance to his rules, because they had a hearty trust in his paternal care. It was well that Providence spared his life so long, that the societies and the itinerancy might have a settled consistency, and be habituated to each other before his death. No man could be expected to take his place, and be to them what he was, or do for them what he did.

The time was fast approaching when the supervision of the connection must pass into other hands. How to provide for this event was a subject of great solicitude to Wesley. His preachers and people sympathized with him in this solicitude. He had been like the keystone

in its place, binding the arch firmly together. How should it be held when he was taken away?

Several things had to be provided for. First, the chapels were all held by trustees, in trust for his use and the preachers he should appoint, and, after his death, for such as the Conference should appoint. But the Conference was not a legal body. It was only a company of men, convened at his pleasure, and not recognized in law. How should it be legalized? The itinerancy, hitherto so harmonious under his authority, might easily be disintegrated after his death, from the want of some cohesive force. How should this itinerancy be perpetuated, and preserved in its integrity, and the authority of the preachers over the societies be unimpaired? How to answer these questions was the subject of frequent consultation between Wesley and his leading preachers. The work was imperative.

In 1784, when he had reached his eightieth year, he submitted to the Conference a legal instrument, called a "Deed of Declaration." In this deed, which was to be the charter and constitution of the Wesleyan connection, and which was recorded in the "High Court of Chancery," he named one hundred of its members who should constitute the legal Conference. It contained also provisions to perpetuate this "legal" Conference, and preserve its numbers. It also specified how the Conference should be organized, and the place of its sessions. It had particular conditions to preserve the itinerancy, and to give the control of the chapels to the Conference. So far as he could make it, the "Deed of Declaration" was the crowning act to give the Wesleyan connection an independence of the Established Church, and to make it a completely organized church.

This sagaciously framed "deed," that should go into effect on the death of Wesley, proved how well the faculties of its author had been preserved with his age. It was liberal and wise in its provisions, and cemented the preachers together by stronger mutual relations and responsibilities. The consequence has been, that the whole Methodist people, both lay and clerical, have generally remained firmly united in affection and confidence.

It is a remarkable fact, that the same year that gave a permanent organization to Wesleyan Methodism in Great Britain, gave a new and permanent organization to Methodism in America. Wesley devised this also. The Revolutionary War having terminated in the independence of the United States, he saw that their interests required that the Methodist societies of this country should be independent of the parent society in England. With characteristic promptness and liberality, he gave his sanction, and made provision to effect it. He ordained Dr. Coke as its superintendent, and Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as elders to assist him to ordain others in this country. The immediate result was the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in the United States.

Every thing in the spirit and economy of Methodism is favorable to self-diffusion. Every Methodist is a propagandist. He is educated to this by his teachers. He has facilities for it in the system. He learns it in the customs of the class-room and love-feast and prayer-meeting. His experience gives him assurance. The men and women are taught to be lay evangelists, and to cultivate the gift of exhortation. To these, in the laity as well as in its ministry, is Methodism chiefly

indebted for its spread in the world. The early disciples, "scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word." So every Methodist, if he move into town or country where his sect is unknown, becomes at once the nucleus of a class, out of which springs the society, and ultimately the district, with its chapels and itinerants.

For nearly forty years after its origin, Methodism was confined — with the exception of the American Colonies — to the mainland of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. It then began to feel its way outward to the islands under British control. Its introduction into most of these was by laymen. Soon the itinerants followed them; and in a few years all these islands, including the Isle of Man, the Isles of Jersey and Guernsey, the Isle of Wight, and the Shetland Islands, had received the gospel by Methodist agency, and had their societies and prosperous circuits. Presently Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and some of the West-India Islands were added to the number; and at Wesley's death, in 1791, these islands of the sea were beginning to rejoice in the gospel light.

Wesley died March 2, 1791. Though so near fourscore and ten, he continued to travel and preach until the "weary wheels of life stood still." During the last few years of his life, his visits to different parts of the connection were occasions of spontaneous ovations of the love and respect, almost the homage, of the people. Where, forty or fifty years before, he had met an infuriated mob, the people now turned out *en masse* to welcome him. All classes, high and low, united to do him reverence. He did not cease, until the last of his life, to look with pleasant solicitude to the interests of his

societies. He preserved, amidst the sufferings of failing flesh, the characteristic equanimity of his temper, and the cheerful hopefulness of his faith in Christ. He had said, "Our people die well," and he gave in his death a happy illustration of his own words. His confident testimony, "The best of all is, God is with us," was a fitting closing commentary on the doctrines he had been preaching for more than half a century. He travelled further, preached more, and was the instrument, directly or indirectly, of the conversion of more souls, than any man that had lived for sixteen centuries.

It would take a volume to discuss thoroughly the character and qualities of John Wesley. In whatever light he may be seen, he was an extraordinary man. He was not, like some distinguished men, eminent in only particular parts. His was a combination and a well-balanced adjustment of all good traits, and an unusual ability to apply them whenever occasion demanded it. That which rendered his whole character most transparent and effective, was its entire subordination to the influence of the Divine Spirit, and, consequently, the unselfishness that appeared in all his acts. He was a truly great man, guided and assisted by divine help.

If we should attempt to give in a paragraph the great excellencies of John Wesley, we would say that he had a happy union of apparently opposite characteristics. While he could readily see the full outlines of any great plan, he as readily comprehended all its details; while he was a profound theorist, he was eminently practical. Adhering tenaciously to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he was also catholic and charitable towards those who differed from him in their belief. He had an ardent temperament; but who

was ever more distinguished for calmness of spirit? Though always in the harness, he was never chafed by it. He worked devoutly, and slept profoundly. His sermons had the strange quality of severe logic, and yet produced the keenest emotions. Though his heart was as tender as a child's, and full of sympathy for human suffering, in peril he was courageous and bold as a lion. His chosen words were serious and grave, but he was ready and apt in his rebukes and retorts to the vain and presumptuous. His impulsions were strong, but his governing power over them equally strong. He bore himself with dignity among the great, and he was a pure specimen of simplicity of manners to the lowly. Those who saw him as he died, might well say, "We ne'er shall see his like again."

Dr. Stevens, *the* historian of Methodism, says of his work, "Wesley not only saw the initiation of the Methodistic movement, but also conducted it through the successive and critical gradations of its development, and lived to see it at last an organic, a settled and permanent system, in the Old World and in the New,—with a thoroughly organized ministry; a well-defined and well-defended theology; the richest psalmody then known to English Protestantism; a considerable literature, not of the highest order, but therefore the better adapted to his numerous people; and a scheme of ecclesiastical discipline which time has proved to be the most effective known beyond the limits of the Papal Church. By his episcopal organization of his American societies, and the legal settlement of his English Conference, he saw his great plan in a sense completed: it could be committed to the contingencies of the future to work out its appointed functions. And, after these two great

events, he was permitted to live long enough to control any incidental disturbances that might attend their first operations, and to pass through a healthful, serene conclusion of his long life, — a life which the philosopher must pronounce singularly successful and fortunate; the Christian, singularly providential. He not only outlived all the various uncertainties of his great work, but he outlived the prolonged and fierce hostilities which had assailed it, and the suspicions and slanders which had been rife against himself personally; and died at last universally venerated, without pain, without disease, in his bed at his own home, at the headquarters of his successful cause, and with the prayers and benedictions of the second and third generations of his people."

The death of Wesley was immediately followed by a critical and perilous state of affairs in the Wesleyan connection. His well-known opinions, and the respect for them, had suppressed, though not destroyed, an increasing desire of many of his preachers for authority to administer the sacraments. This desire was doubtless strengthened by the knowledge that he had given this authority to the church in America. A large part of the members of the societies sympathized with the wishes of the preachers. Wesley's influence had prevented the agitation of this subject in the Conference a number of times in the thirty years prior to his death. Now that he was gone, and the Conference placed in nominal independence of the Established Church, the demand for a home administration of the sacraments could no longer be quieted. It became at once an earnest contest. A majority of the Conference, and a large portion of the humbler members of the societies, favored the measure. Many of the trustees of the

chapels, sympathizing with the pretensions of the English Church, were opposed to giving the preachers the desired power. The controversy began at the first Conference after Wesley's death, and soon developed itself into three parties, — the High Church, the Conservatives, and the Radicals; the first insisting on a continued dependence on the Church for the sacraments. But few of the preachers sympathized with this party. The Conservatives, among whom were most of the leading men of the Conference, claimed the right, but, for prudential reasons, favored giving power to the preachers to administer the sacraments only in those societies where a majority desired it. The Radicals were few, but resolute in demanding entire severance from the Church. These were led by Alexander Kellam, — a firm, persistent man. The controversy lasted for five years. Each successive Conference adopted some new resolutions concerning the matter in dispute, and each one worked nearer and nearer to entire independence of the English Church. It was finally consummated by a "plan of pacification" between the High-Church party and the Conservatives. Kellam and a few disaffected ones organized a separate party, called the "New-Connection Methodists," which still exists, though its numbers are not large.

What may seem strange, is nevertheless true, that amidst all the storm and dispute arising from the controversy regarding the sacraments, and the severe things said on both sides, the Wesleyan Church increased, and the love and fellowship of its preachers and people had not been greater at any former time in its history.

We have thus far followed Wesleyan Methodism from its origin to the death of its founder, — a period of

little more than half a century. We have seen it originating in a new spiritual life in Wesley's soul, and in the souls of those who took his name. It has demonstrated its spirit and energy in the conversion of scores of thousands, — many of them of the lowest and rudest class of English society, — reforming them in manners and life. It has established itself in all parts of Great Britain, under a systematic connectional organization, unprecedented for its power to conserve and aggress. It has contended with, and triumphed over, violent persecutions. It has raised up a class of ministerial laborers, drawn from the common people, and proving their apostolic authority by their success and the "wisdom with which they spake." The inchoate societies have become, in their connectional power, another "Establishment" in the kingdom. The controversies through which the denomination has passed have only given it a better-defined and wider-known position, without disturbing its stability or piety. The scoffer has been taught to respect it, the poor to love it, and sinners to trust it. It has secured in all places of the kingdom a "local habitation and a name." The mustard seed has become a great tree, and many are lodging in its branches.

The first half-century of Methodism may be properly characterized as a period of home evangelization. It had sought to convert and save a home people, speaking the English tongue, and among whom there was already an existing nominal church. Since then, besides preserving this domestic evangelism, Wesleyan Methodism has been earnestly engaged in bearing the gospel message to "regions beyond," — in seeking to make the heathen world a trophy of the power of the cross. It had "begun at Jerusalem." It now turned

to preach "repentance and remission of sins to all nations."

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the missionary character of British Methodism has been its great honor. It began surely, though slowly, to lay its vigorous hands on lands far remote, with populations sunk in the lowest depths of barbarism; but it has succeeded in bringing these nations, one after another, to a fair state of civilization, and to develop some of the best traits of Christianity.

Other portions of the Protestant Church have come in to help in this great enterprise; but to Wesleyan Methodism belongs the credit of being the pioneers in the work, and of contributing more men and means, and of being instrumental in the conversion of more souls from pagan darkness to the light of the gospel, than any other church in the great missionary period of three-quarters of a century.

The prime mover in this missionary scheme, who inspired the whole Wesleyan body with a missionary fire, was Thomas Coke, recently ordained by Wesley bishop for America. His first visit to this country was short, but it awakened in him an intense desire for missionary labor. On his return to England, he began by personal applications to obtain funds, and to enlist men for Nova Scotia. In 1786, he embarked from England, with three "helpers," for his new missionary field. A severe storm drove the vessel to Antigua, West Indies. Though it wrought adversely to Coke's design, the hand of God was in the storm. The missionaries began to preach Christ to the people of the island, and with great success. Very soon they extended their work, and visited a number of the neighboring islands, and

formed societies in them also. They planted the seed, and it bore abundant fruit. It ultimately became a part of the great West-India Missions of Wesleyan Methodism.

Coke returned again to England, and travelled through the connection, interesting the churches by his narration of the wonderful work of God in the islands, collecting money, and finding men to reinforce his newly opened field. For a quarter of a century the West-India missions, continually increasing in interest, were under his immediate charge. When he died, in 1814, nearly every island in the West-India Archipelago was included in the missions; and such has been their prosperity, that at the present time they have nearly *one hundred missionaries*, about *two hundred local preachers*, and over *fifty thousand church members*.

For many years before the death of Dr. Coke, he had set his heart on a mission to the East Indies; but the way had not opened to establish it. In the year 1813, he went to work in right earnest to accomplish the desire of his heart. He found *nine* volunteers, chiefly from Ireland; and, though himself sixty-seven years old, he presented himself to the Wesleyan Conference, and proposed to go with them to the Island of Ceylon,—the gateway to the East Indies. The Conference had great affection for Coke, and admired his zeal: he had given a missionary spirit to the societies; but he was asking the Conference to assume a great responsibility,—greater than they were prepared to take. Benson said, "It will ruin Methodism." But Coke was not to be denied. He said, "If you do not consent, it will break my heart." And the Conference consented. It may be doubted which was most benefited by his appeal,—the members of the Conference, or India.

Having made all proper preparations, he embarked with his missionaries for Ceylon. He died on his passage thither. The noble enterprise did not die. God took away the head workman, "but he carried on the work." His associate missionaries reached their destination, and began at once their mission work. What wonderful results have followed! Other churches have united in cultivating East India for Christ; but the Wesleyan Methodists lead the van, and scores of missionaries, and thousands of communicants, are the living memorials of the noble purpose and enterprise of Coke.

It may seem severe to say that the death of any good man is a good providence. But is it not often true? Was it not true in respect to the death of Dr. Coke? While he lived, the Wesleyan body intrusted to him the responsibility and direction of its missions abroad. After his death, that responsibility devolved on many; and, though the news of his death was a severe shock to the church, it gave a new impulse to the missionary spirit, and brought out many men, laymen as well as ministers, with hearts and talents ready for the emergency. It resulted in the formation of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, — the most systematic organization in Protestantism for the propagation of Christianity. It soon led the church that formed it to add to its work of home evangelization the great and noble purpose of missionary efforts for the conversion of the world.

We cannot dwell on the details of the work of this grand society, — itself the best exponent of what Wesleyan Methodism has done for half a century. It has trained every member and child in the connection to be a systematic contributor to its funds, and infused them with the nobleness of its spirit. Immediately it began

to dot the dark coast of Africa with its mission stations, and to work inward to the cannibal tribes of the interior. Next came its introduction of evangelical missions to Oceanica and Australia; and the islands of the Polynesian groups were included among its successful missions. The fruit of these missions has been the astonishment of the Christian church. The conversion of thousands of the most degraded cannibals to a life of godliness has given the best proof exhibited in modern times of the saving power of the gospel.

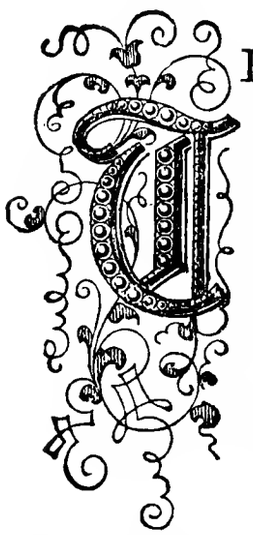
Australia has now a Conference, embracing the islands of Polynesia, with over *one hundred and fifty preachers*, and more than *forty thousand church members*, besides many schools, printing presses, and other agencies to prosecute the great missionary work. And yet these are only a part of the vast domain cultivated and supported by the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

The home church has participated in the benefits of the great missionary movement. The effect was not less reflex than direct. It gave a pure tone and noble quality to home piety. It gave enlarged views and sympathizing hearts respecting the religious wants of the world. It cultivated the spirit of prayer and liberality. It united the whole connection, by bringing it to think and feel and pray and give for a common object; and it characterized Wesleyan Methodism — as it has steadily prospered and progressed — as the Missionary church of Christendom.

CHAPTER VI.

AMERICAN METHODISM INITIATED.

"Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."



TEN years before the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, the American colonies presented much that was promising for the introduction of an earnest, experimental evangelism, like Methodism. Not the least of this promise was, that, in one part or another, almost every sect of Christendom was already in occupancy. New York was perhaps the best part of the whole field in which to plant the first seed.

Originally settled from different parts of Continental Europe and Great Britain, each company or class of emigrants had brought with it that particular form of Christianity in which it had been educated, and to which it was attached. Perhaps it was a part of the Divine plan for the greater development of this country, that every sect should, by a fair rivalry, prove its comparative value in aiding the growth and perfecting the civilization of the New World. The other sects were here when Methodism came to complete the number, and take a prominent part in working out the destinies of a State that should cover the northern division of the hemisphere.

New England, with the exception of Rhode Island, had established a Puritanical Congregationalism. "Little Rhody" had adopted a civil constitution very tolerant to all forms of religious worship, and was originally, and chiefly, settled by Baptists. The Quakers and Presbyterians mostly occupied New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Delaware was settled by the Swedes, who introduced Lutheranism. Maryland had a liberal charter, but was founded by Romanists. Virginia was peopled by the supporters of the Church of England. The colonists further south were composed of Huguenots, Churchmen, Moravians, and Presbyterians. New York had already begun to assume the character of a cosmopolitan city, and, with a population of twenty thousand, had representative organizations of nearly every known Christian sect. Its original settlers were from Holland, and introduced both the Lutheran and the Reformed-Dutch Churches. The city coming under British rule, gave to the English Church a prominent place and influence. Very soon, in quick succession, came Presbyterian, Moravian, and Baptist Churches. When Methodism sought entrance, it found a great variety and diversity of religious beliefs and forms, which would either aid or hinder its success.

This diversity was in many respects favorable to the introduction of Methodism. At least it created toleration in religious opinion and worship. The settlers of the colonies, however partial they might have been to their own religious peculiarities, were disposed to grant a large license to liberty of conscience. Many of them had been driven from their former homes in the Old World by oppressive acts restraining their liberty in following their religious preferences. Gener-

erally, they had learned to abhor ecclesiastical, as well as political, tyranny. They would be quite unwilling to favor any civil enactments or practices that would make their new home as uneasy as the old.

The mutual intercourse and alliances between the different colonies, for protection and trade, created respect and forbearance toward each other's religious faith. There was a common consent that each should worship "under his own vine and fig-tree, and none should molest or make him afraid."

Methodism had therefore a fair opportunity, without let or hindrance, to prove its worthiness or unworthiness of the confidence of the people, and to prosecute its work of propagandism in America without legal restrictions or penalties.

But toleration and favor are by no means the same thing. Permission to Methodism to teach its peculiar doctrines, and to enjoy unmolested its church usages, did not imply that either its doctrines or usages were countenanced or encouraged by other professed Christians. The feeling of the different denominations of the country towards each other was very far from sympathy or fellowship. The New-England, not less than the Old-England, Puritan was firmly, if not bigotedly, set against all the rituals and ceremonies of the Anglican Church. The Churchman in America had no higher opinion of what he called an unordained lay ministry than had his brother Churchman in England. The Quaker despised and denounced the hireling priesthood, as he called the ministers of other sects; and the Baptists excluded the Quaker, and all others who had not received their peculiar form of sacred washing by water, from their communion. Methodism having its

peculiarities, and being quite as much disposed as others to declare them undisguisedly and prominently, could expect but little favor—if it did not receive decided opposition—from the various denominations already established.

It had, it is true, an advantage in coming to a nominally Christian people, and not to a heathen; to a people acknowledging the inspiration of the Bible, and the divine authority of the sabbath; a people professing to believe in most of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, —as the doctrine of a Divine Redeemer and a Divine Spirit, and of a distinction between the characters of saints and sinners. But what the Bible taught, or how the redemption of Christ affected men, or what was essential to be a saint, were questions that received great diversity of answers. Methodism differed quite as much, in the answer it gave to them, from the other sects, as they differed from one another. It could therefore expect but little "aid and comfort" from them on this account.

The most decided opposition to Methodism arose from its positive and open declaration of a present, free, and full salvation by Christ, and the assurance of it in the soul by the Holy Spirit. From the emphatic manner in which Methodism stated these doctrines, and the importance it attached to them, they became a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence."

There were, however, a few persons in America who heartily sympathized with Methodism, and gave it a cordial welcome. This came chiefly from some special evangelical efforts that had preceded its introduction in the colonies. The great awakening in New England, through the agency of Edwards; and in New Jersey and Virginia,

by the labors of the Tennants and Davies; and the successive passages of Whitefield through the land, preaching the necessity of experimental godliness,—had excited attention to the truths that Methodism proclaimed; and a number of witnesses had testified to their knowledge of these truths. But most of these witnesses had fallen asleep. A few of them remained. There were also a few devoted and faithful pastors who were quietly endeavoring to lead their flocks into "green pastures." From these "elect" ones the Methodist doctrines found a hearty response and sympathy, and the itinerants were greeted by them as laborers beloved.

But the general state of religion in the country, in regard to Christian experience, was at the lowest ebb. The doctrine that the Spirit of God dwelt in the hearts of believers, and gave them assurance of sins forgiven, found but few to welcome it, and fewer still to profess it. It might be found printed in the liturgy, or implied in the teachings of the catechism; but Christians were generally infidel in respect to its experience. It had to them a savor of enthusiasm and pretension. The Methodists who taught or professed it were considered simply deluded fanatics.

Methodism had another formidable obstacle to its success. This was from the social and literary status of the men who introduced it. In the days of Embury, as in the days of Christ, those who assumed to be teachers of religion based their authority to teach on superior social position, their human commissions, and their liberal education. They virtually denied the necessity of a preparation that was chiefly from above. Respecting others who made but little pretension to

these things, their common language of contempt was, "Are not all these Galileans?" and to such it was often said, "Dost thou, that wast wholly born in sin, teach us?" Methodism had to contend everywhere with the prejudices against the humble social state, and the unlettered qualifications, of its ministers. Embury was a carpenter; Webb was from the soldier's barracks; Strawbridge from the bogs of Ireland. They made no pretensions to more than ordinary human learning. As Jesse Lee afterwards said to a captious inquisitor, "They had learning enough to find their way through the country." What was regarded as worse than their lack of education, they were unauthorized volunteer preachers, with scarcely the direct sanction and authority of the leader of their *quasi* sect across the water. They were simply local preachers, and apparent adventurers, with neither ordination nor the high commission of synod or council, without a people, and almost without a name,—laborers by day, and preachers at night.

Fearfully formidable were these hindrances to the success of the initiators of American Methodism. The time has now come when they no longer exist; but they must not be forgotten as they existed in those early days. They were no reproach to the church. They rather show the attendant power of God with the men who, notwithstanding such embarrassments, triumphed over all these obstacles. They show how "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are."

In our estimate of the divine intervention in intro-

ducing Methodism in America, we must not forget that it was undertaken without any preconception by the men who were the instruments in its introduction. Three of the four to whom belongs the honor of its origin came to this country without any design of attempting any such thing. Embury and Strawbridge came here as common emigrants, to improve their worldly condition. Captain Webb was engaged in filling his appointment as a wounded, retired officer in the army. Neither of them thought that he was beginning a great evangelical movement that was to spread over, and to affect the destinies of, a nation, — perhaps of the world. They were thrust out, — in the case of Embury, apparently unwillingly, — to do the "Lord's bidding;" and what they did "was the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes."

Such was the religious state of the American churches, favorable or unfavorable, when Philip Embury preached his first sermon in his own hired house in Barrack Street, New York, and initiated Methodism on this continent. We are now to ask, How did he succeed?

Writers on Methodist history do not agree as to where Methodism in the colonies was first organized, — whether in New York or Maryland, whether by Embury or Strawbridge. Dr. Stevens and Wakeley give the credit of it to the former; Dr. Hamilton and Roberts, with some show of reason, give it to the latter. The indefiniteness of the records leaves the matter in some doubt. We think the evidence, on the whole, is in favor of priority to Embury. There could have been but little difference in the time when both began their evangelical work. The honor of priority may properly be ascribed to both, for neither of them was induced to begin from any

knowledge he had of the other. Each was as strictly a pioneer in his respective field as if the other had never begun. If Embury was first to begin, Strawbridge was not less devoted and laborious, and quite as good a type of a zealous itinerant. In the wide extent of his circuit, and in the abundant fruit of his labor, he has strong claims to pre-eminence.

The initiation of Methodism in America must properly be attributed to four men. Philip Embury led the way in New York, Thomas Webb in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Robert Strawbridge in Maryland, and Robert Williams in Virginia and North Carolina. They were all local preachers, — a class of sub-pastors in the Methodist economy, that have been remarkably useful in introducing Methodism into regions before unvisited by regular itinerants, — effective skirmishers in the Methodist army. The history of initial American Methodism is chiefly a sketch of the movements of these men.

On a fine spring day in the year 1760, a company of emigrants for America were gathered on the wharf at Limerick, Ireland. They were, as usual in such groups, from the humble class, seeking to "better their condition" in the promising prospects of the New World. There was nothing in their external appearance to attract special attention from a looker-on. A few of them were Methodists. But in that group were two personages, Philip Embury and Barbara Heck, who were to take an important part in founding Methodism in the American Colonies, — he, the first follower of Wesley to preach the gospel in the land of his adoption; to organize the first class, and be the first class-leader; to build the first church, constructing the pulpit with his own hands, and preaching its dedication sermon; — she

to be the means, by her rebuke and persuasion, of inducing him to begin his work, and, by her faith and zeal, of inspiring the infant band of Methodist disciples with courage to erect the first church.

Embury, though coming from Ireland, was not Celtic in his origin. His ancestors were from the Palatinate, on the Rhine, and were among the many families driven from their homes by the violent persecutions of Louis XIV to find refuge on some foreign soil. A few of these families had found an asylum, and located in small communities, in County Limerick, Ireland. Here they had remained for half a century. They were without pastors, speaking their native language, and had become thoroughly demoralized in their lives. In this state they were visited by Methodist itinerants. The effect of the itinerant's mission among them was,— what was not unusual,— that the desolate land was made to rejoice, and the wilderness to blossom as the rose. These communities — Court Mattrass, Killiheen, Balligarrane — became sober, devout, and praying people; and, very strangely, from one of these families, driven hither by the bigoted Catholic king because of his hatred of Protestantism, was to come forth a young man that was to be the pioneer of the most numerous and vigorous church of Protestantism in the Western Hemisphere. So wonderfully does God "make the wrath of man to praise him."

Philip Embury was one of the early converts to Methodism in Belligarrane. A record in his old Bible says that he was converted "Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 1752." In early life he had been instructed in German and English, and he became a fair scholar for one in his humble life. As if Providence designed him to be the builder of the first material — as well as spiritual — Meth-

odist church in America, he learned the trade of a carpenter.

Embury began soon after his conversion to officiate in various ways for the religious improvement of his neighbors, — first as a class-leader, and then as a local preacher. He was very highly esteemed; and, at the time he embarked for America, he was recognized as quite a leader in the Methodist societies of the communities around Court Mattrass. Many of his Christian friends came to Limerick to say farewell, and receive his parting blessing.

We are left wholly in doubt respecting the religious course of Embury for six years after his arrival in New York. Any opinion about it is only conjectural. The most natural one is that he began to preach, or at least that he sought in some social way to aid his countrymen who emigrated with him to maintain the integrity of their Christian life, but that he had discontinued his efforts from want of success. It is quite certain that most of them had given up their pretensions to religion, both in form and practice.

The name of Barbara Heck deserves to be written among the first on the scroll of honor to those who gave to Methodism an American history. The little that is recorded concerning her is enough to show that she was a woman of noble mould, both in mind and heart. She was a cousin of Embury; and amidst the religious declension of her associates, the emigrants, she preserved her devotional spirit and Christian faithfulness unimpaired. For six years her righteous soul was grieved that so many of them departed from the faith, and denied the Saviour they had professed to love.

Aroused at last by the increasing sins of her coun-

trymen, she hastened to Embury; and, falling on her knees before him, she rebuked him for his past neglect of duty, and exhorted him to begin preaching, saying, "If you do not, we shall all go to hell together." But he replied, "I have neither a place nor a congregation." Mrs. Heck would not be denied, and said to him, "Preach in your own house and to your own countrymen;" and she went out, and gathered four others for his audience. To this small company, in a small room, Embury preached. He immediately formed a class of those present, and became the class-leader. Henceforth the class met weekly, and he continued to preach frequently. This was the commencement of organized Methodism in America. How unpretentious and unpromising! How it contrasted with the introduction of the other Protestant sects of the country! The Pilgrims came, seeking a land they knew not where, bringing their *pastor*, and rallying around him,—their spiritual leader. The Dutch brought their *Dominie* Bogardus, and built for him a church where they all worshipped. The emigrant representatives of the English Church brought their *rector*, with the insignia of his authority. But the Methodist pioneer began his mission in his own small house, without a church or any of the prestige of patronage. He was at best a volunteer, a local preacher,—and a carpenter.

Embury preached frequently to the company that assembled at his house. But the little room became too small for his audience. Soon another and larger place was obtained, and the expense of it met by voluntary contributions. This, in turn, was too strait for the crowd. Many were awakened by the preaching, and converted. Embury formed another class. The fame of his meetings

was "noised abroad." Their interest increased, and began to attract the attention of the city towards the new sect. Some treated the feeble band with contempt, some wondered, others severely criticized; but others were added to their number, rejoicing in the power of God to save.

At this time another character appeared among the infant society, — one who would add to its future prosperity more than its first preacher. Embury was a good man, but he lacked some qualities necessary to make him an effective and great leader. His talents were only fair. He was retiring in his habits, sometimes melancholy, and easily disheartened. He was faithful as a workman; but he needed a bolder spirit to inspire him in perplexities, — one of greater resolution and courage to assume the responsibility, and direct the developing capacities, of the growing church. Providence sent him such a man.

One day, when the Methodist company were assembled in their crowded room to listen to the plain teaching of their acknowledged spiritual guide, a stranger appeared among them, dressed in the scarlet uniform of an officer of the king's army. His presence excited wonder, suspicion, and alarm. He was an uncommon personage in their company. "All eyes were upon him. Had he come to persecute them, to interrupt their religious services, or prohibit them from worshipping?" They looked at each other inquiringly. Very soon, however, their suspicions were dispelled, and their fears quieted. As the fears of Ananias were allayed, when told to go to Saul of Tarsus, by the assurance, "Behold! he prayeth;" so were those of these worshippers when they saw this officer kneel when they knelt, and sing most lustily when they sang. He had come to join with

them in their devotions; and, when the meeting closed, they greeted him as a brother beloved.

This man was Captain Thomas Webb, — another *local preacher* among them. He had heard of the struggling society in New York, and had come from his residence in Albany, to cheer them by his presence and his word. The important part that he took in the origin of Methodism in America entitles him to further notice.

Webb had been for a number of years an officer in the British army. At the battle of Louisburg and the taking of Quebec, he lost an eye, and was wounded in the arm. It was about eight years after this battle that he heard Wesley preach at Bristol. The year before his appearance in New York, he had joined the Methodist society, and been licensed to preach by Wesley. He subsequently became barrack-master at Albany, and here he heard of the little Methodist company in New York. He possessed many qualities that eminently qualified him for an effective Methodist evangelist. First of these was a thorough experience of the work of the Spirit in his own heart. "His evidence of the favor of God was so bright that he never lost a sense of that blessed truth, 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'" He had great decision in his purposes to do good, and great activity in accomplishing his purposes, — qualities that were very important in a leader at this juncture in Methodist history. He was also gifted with natural eloquence. Wesley said of him, "He is all life and fire." President John Adams, who heard him while attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1774, described him as "the old soldier, — one of the most eloquent men I ever heard: he reaches the imagination and touches the passions very well, and ex-

presses himself with great propriety." Another writer says, "They saw the warrior in his face, and heard the missionary in his voice. Under his holy eloquence they trembled, they wept, and fell down under his mighty word." What was not least in his qualifications to give aid to growing Methodism, he felt an intense interest in its success, and was ready to consecrate to it all his time, his talents, and his means.

The Lord sent Captain Webb to New York. His natural eloquence, made more impressive by his religious fervor, and the manifest influence of the Holy Spirit; the novelty of a preacher in regimentals, for he always wore his uniform in the pulpit, — drew the people in crowds to hear him.

The hired room was soon too small to accommodate them; and the young society transferred its meetings to a larger one,— a "rigging loft" in William Street. "Even this could not contain half the people that desired to attend;" and, what was of more value than simple hearers, many who attended were converted, and united with the society.

How they could obtain more room became to them a serious question. Every member was poor. If they gave all their possessions, real, personal, and mixed, in imitation of the early Christians, their aggregate offerings would hardly be sufficient to build a chapel.

"The liberal heart deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things it shall stand." The generous soul of Barbara Heck saw that the work could be done. "Before Zerubbabel the mountain would become a plain." She made it the subject of special prayer, and believed that she received answer, "I the Lord will do it." She presented to the society a plan of a building that she

thought the spirit had daguerreotyped on her mind, and the society adopted it. Every member gave largely according to his means. The citizens generally subscribed liberally. A lot was obtained on John Street, then *quite up town*, and the first Methodist church in America was built. Embury, the local preacher and carpenter, constructed the pulpit with his own hands, and preached the dedication sermon, Oct. 30, 1768.

At that time the population of New York was about *twenty thousand.* Since then, in it and the adjoining cities of Brooklyn and Jersey City, — that really make one city, — Methodism has dedicated, on an average, *two churches every three years*, down to the present time.

Embury was the *local* preacher; Captain Webb was the *itinerant.* He went out on Long Island, hired a "preaching house" at Jamaica, and twenty-four persons professed justifying faith. He frequently passed through New Jersey, and preached in its principal towns. He passed on to Philadelphia, preached in another "sail loft," and founded Methodism in that city. He introduced it in several places in Delaware. He wrote an earnest appeal to Wesley, requesting him to send missionaries to this country; and when they arrived in Philadelphia, where a society of an hundred members were gathered, he was there to welcome them. He knew no rest in the work nearest his heart. In 1772 he visited England, and made another appeal to the Wesleyan Conference for men; and returned with the two that were sent. He continued in this country, devoting his time with great zeal, itinerating and preaching, till near the beginning of the Revolutionary War. He then returned to England.

In determining the relative influence of Captain Webb in initiating Methodism in the colonies, we think all

will agree with Dr. Stevens, that, while "to Embury unquestionably belongs chronological precedence by a few months, as the founder of American Methodism, to Webb belongs the honor of a more prominent agency in the great event, — of more extensive and effective services."

Another "Methodist fire" broke out in Maryland, through the agency of another *local preacher*, who was also an emigrant from Ireland. Without the co-operation or knowledge of the little band in New York, Robert Strawbridge began to preach in his "own house," in Fairfax County, — the western, backwoods portion of the State. The flame he kindled spread more rapidly than the one in New York.

We confess to a strong attraction towards Strawbridge. He led, rather than was pushed on, in his work. He was every inch of him a true Irish Methodist evangelist. He "wore out, rather than rusted out." He had many of the prominent traits that often distinguish his countrymen. He was "generous, energetic, fiery, and versatile." Independent, and impatient of formal restraints, he cared more to save souls than to provide for his own household. He founded Methodism in nearly all parts of Maryland, and he found there a soil giving it a more rapid growth and a more abundant harvest than was found in any other portion of the country.

We know but little of Strawbridge before he emigrated to America. Of his antecedents and history, however, enough is known to inspire confidence in his missionary labors here. He was born in County Leitrim, Ireland. Persecution, because of his religious zeal, drove him from home soon after his conversion. He then went, first to County Sligo, then to Cavan, and last

to County Armagh. In each of these he devoted himself, and was very successful, as a local preacher. From the last, he emigrated with his young wife to this country, in 1764 or 1765. He settled on "Sam's Creek," Frederick County, Md. The region of his settlement was new, "and had but recently been reclaimed from the perils of savage invasion. He opened his house for preaching, formed in it a Methodist society, and, not long after, built the 'log meeting-house' on Sam's Creek, about a mile from his house. It was a rude structure, twenty-two feet square, and, though long occupied, was never finished."

Strawbridge's ardent spirit could not be confined to Sam's Creek nor to Frederick County. "He became virtually an itinerant. He journeyed to and fro in Eastern Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Northern Virginia, preaching with an ardor and a fluency that surprised his hearers, and drew them in multitudes to his rustic assemblies." He formed societies in Baltimore and Harford Counties. A large number who became native preachers, and were distinguished in the establishment of Methodism, were brought to the knowledge of Christ through his instrumentality.

His name appears in the minutes of the Conference in 1773 and in 1775. Why he then retired from it is not certainly known. Dr. Stevens thinks, "that his Irish spirit could not brook the stern authority of Asbury and his British associates, especially the requirement which they and their party so strictly enforced, that the administration of the sacraments by Methodist preachers should be suspended." Strawbridge had for some time assumed to administer the sacraments to the societies in his care. He retired to the pastoral charge

of his favorite Sam's Creek society. After residing here a short time, a liberal friend gave him a life interest in a farm in Long Green, Baltimore County; and he removed to it. He continued to itinerate and preach until 1781, when he died, and was buried by his son in the gospel, Richard Owen, — the first native Methodist preacher on the American continent.

Robert Strawbridge was a truly great man. It is probably true, that, in respect to carefulness for this world, he had little concern, if he was not really improvident. He was always poor. His neighbors, in their generosity, cultivated his little farm, and took care of his family, while he was absent preaching the Word. He often asked, "Who will keep the wolf from my own door, while I am abroad seeking after the lost sheep?" But he was a free laborer; and his response was, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This was his pardonable infirmity,—much more so than if he had restrained the word of the Lord to seek the mammon of unrighteousness.

He "could not brook the stern authority of Asbury" respecting the sacraments. This did not arise from weakness or wilfulness. He honestly believed that he, to whom God committed the ministration of the word of Christ, ought to possess the power to convey his symbols. Nor does his belief appear to us in this day strange or unreasonable. Expediency was less consulted by him than divine authority.

We admire the man, — his noble, irrepressible spirit, his untiring zeal, and his hearty devotion to the cause of his Master. He was an eloquent speaker, a sweet singer, a good expositor of the Scriptures, very entertaining in social conversation, and devoutly religious.

He awakened a deeply religious interest in all the regions round about him, — more than any other man of his times. Besides being the first Methodist preacher in the Middle Colonies, he was the means of bringing many hundreds into his newly organized Methodist societies.

Such was the double initiation of Methodism in America: rather, such were the two springs from which it flowed forth to water the coming great nation of the Western world, — one of them breaking out in the metropolis of the land, promising also to be the metropolis of the world (it was well to "begin at Jerusalem"); the other bursting forth in the backwoods regions of a central colony, and taking various directions, westward, northward, and southward; — one originating from the labors of the conscientious, diffident, and retiring Embury; the other from the earnest zeal of the impetuous and self-denying Strawbridge. We shall find the issues of these springs moving on, coalescing, widening, and deepening, until they have covered and refreshed the republic, and improved the religious quality of the nation.

It could not be expected that the reception of Methodism in New York, or in the country generally, would be very cordial or appreciative. The truths it announced, the religious experience it professed, and its confident way of putting both of these, would not please the existing churches. So long, however, as its movements were confined to the small house of Embury, it showed nothing of sufficient importance to awaken opposition; and the young, feeble society suffered nothing from any adverse influences to its prosperity. But when it began in the sail-loft, and only a part of the crowd that came could find admittance, and especially when it began to

be noised abroad that the Methodists were about to build a "habitation for the Lord," then opposition to them began. One of the first trustees of the church, writing to Mr. Wesley, says, "Before we began to talk of building, the Devil and his children were very peaceable; but, since then, many ministers have cursed us in the name of the Lord, and labored with all their might to stop their congregations from assisting us. But He that sitteth in the highest laughed them to scorn."

The walls of the new chapel went up; and the top stone was raised with the shoutings of the young society. Many of the citizens sympathized with the enterprise, and subscribed liberally towards it. Wakeley, in his "lost chapters" of Methodism, gives a list of two hundred and fifty names, and the amount each subscribed to the work, from the mayor of the city to the poor colored servant girl. That which most of all encouraged the struggling society was, the chapel was soon filled with earnest and attentive worshippers.

The society at Sam's Creek had comparatively little opposition. The country had but recently been opened for the peaceable settlement of a white population. Mr. Strawbridge's log chapel was the "cathedral" of the backwoods, and he the honored "bishop" of this new-region diocese. His zeal and talents made him in great demand, and he had a "virgin soil" to cultivate.

We have said that Captain Webb introduced Methodism in Philadelphia. The society in that city increased, so that in 1770 it purchased a house of worship, that has been well known since as "Old St. George's,"—the mother church of Methodism there. She has now a large family. Methodism has more churches, and a larger membership, in Philadelphia than any other denomination.

The increase of Methodism in New York and Philadelphia, and the desire of its members to be immediately connected with Mr. Wesley, and under his supervision, induced them to send to him for regularly commissioned itinerants. "We want," said one of the officers of the New-York society, "an able and experienced preacher, — one who has both gifts and graces necessary for the work." Though preparing for the erection of the new "Wesley Chapel," they were still worshipping in the rigging loft. He says, "Our house, for these six weeks past, could not contain half the people: send one, at once, whose heart and soul are in the work." He says also, "With respect to money for the payment of the preachers over, if they cannot procure it, we will sell our coats and shirts to procure it for them."

The news of the rapid progress of Methodism in the colonies was quite extensively circulated in England, and excited great interest among the Wesleyans there for its future success.

Wesley waited for the ensuing Conference before he responded to the call for laborers for America. Before that Conference, another local preacher was on his way to join in the toils and triumphs of the distant field. Robert Williams applied to Wesley for authority to preach in the colonies. He obtained permission on condition that he would be subject to the missionaries that were about to be sent. But Williams could not delay; and learning that his friend Mr. Ashton, of Ireland, was about to embark, he hastened to the port, sold his horse to pay his debts, and, carrying his saddle-bags on his arm, set off for the ship, with a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk, but with no money for his passage. Ashton paid his passage, and they landed in New York before the arrival of Wesley's missionaries.

Williams began at once to preach in the new chapel, and became noted as "the first Methodist minister in America that published a book, the first that married, the first that located, and the first that died." He had the true enthusiasm and courage of a Methodist pioneer.

After spending a short time in New York, Williams joined Strawbridge, and aided him for a while in spreading Methodism over Maryland. He then directed his way southward, and introduced it into Virginia. He was the founder of Methodism in that State. The first account of him says, that, unannounced and unknown, he stood on the steps of the Court House in Norfolk, and gathered a congregation around him by singing, and, after prayer, began to preach. The audience were in doubt respecting him, some of them supposing that he was mad, and went away declaring they had never heard such a man: "Sometimes he would preach, then he would pray, then he would swear (referring to his frequent use of the words "devil" and "hell"), and at times he would cry." But, when they heard him again the next day, they had a better opinion of him, and offered him their hospitalities.

He soon formed a Methodist society in Norfolk; probably the first in the State. The year after this, he joined the Conference, and returned again to Virginia.

Methodism found but few sympathizers in this country among the ministers of other denominations. Some of them treated it with contempt. Others spoke of its members as deluded and mistaken zealots. Many opposed and denounced it. Occasionally one appreciated its mission, and encouraged its preachers. Williams found such a man in Rev. Devereaux Jarratt; an apostolic Churchman in Sussex County, Va. This de-

voted minister received Williams to his house, and entertained him for a week, while the zealous itinerant was preaching and organizing societies in all that portion of the country. Williams gathered hundreds into these societies, and became an apostle of Methodism in that State. His success was so great that, the next year, over a thousand members were reported to Conference, and five preachers were appointed to Virginia the ensuing year. Williams entered North Carolina, and formed a circuit, extending from Petersburg to beyond the Roanoke River.

One of his converts was the famous Jesse Lee, the pioneer of Methodism in New England. Asbury said of Williams, after his death, "Perhaps no one in America has been an instrument of awakening so many souls as God has awakened by him." He married, located near Norfolk, and died in 1775. His grave is unknown, but his memory is precious. He was the first volunteer from England to respond to the call for help, and was not inferior to his associates in talents, and in his success in initiating Methodism in America.

Other men, having a full commission from Wesley to supervise and extend the Methodistic movement in this country, are now to be introduced. Their experience and their energy in the mission to which they were appointed will command our respect, and interest us in their work. But we cannot fail to be impressed with the remarkable fact, that the foundation of Methodism here was laid by *four local preachers*, — a class of men who have been signally honored of God, in other instances than this, to pioneer and to precede the regular itinerants, and to introduce Methodism in places where it had been before unknown. We cannot fail to award

them the credit of beginning the work as volunteers, without any promise or hope of pecuniary reward or the temptations of worldly aggrandizement, and the credit of giving their life with a consuming zeal to the enterprise they had undertaken. The names of Embury, Webb, Strawbridge, and Williams will always be sacredly cherished as household words wherever Methodism is known, and will be intimately associated with its initial movements in America.

CHAPTER VII.

AMERICAN METHODISM. — WESLEY'S MISSIONARIES.

"Come over and help us."

IT was natural that the newly initiated and scarcely formed Methodist societies in America should desire the aid and formal recognition of Wesley. Probably most of their members were emigrants, who knew of his paternal relation to Wesleyanism in England. Their infancy and feebleness would dispose them to seek the support and nourishment of the parent. Their hope of enlargement would prompt them to ask co-operation and patronage.

They had hardly begun service in the rigging loft, crowded beyond its capacity, when they said to Wesley, Send us "an able and experienced preacher: we importune your assistance." They multiplied their letters of importunity. They assured him of their earnestness and solicitude, by the strongest pledges of self-denial to meet the expense incurred by the men who will come. One of them said, "if it were necessary to pay the passage of the missionaries, they would sell their coats and shirts to do it." With such intense desire for aid, how gladly and thankfully they welcomed the missionaries when they arrived! Let us look in on the Wesleyan Conference at Leeds, England, and see the disposition

of the Conference in respect to the call upon them to send men to America.

A nobler, purer-minded company of men had not often assembled than composed that body of devoted itinerants. They had been "broken in" to the work of evangelism by sacrifices and self-denial. Wesley, their honored father, rose and announced to them, "We have a pressing call from our brethren in New York (who have built a preaching-house), to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?" It was not said, Can we possibly spare any from the rapidly extending work at home, when the demand here for increasing laborers is so great? It was not, How will they be supported in the colonies? But "Who is willing to go?" It was an extraordinary question. Wesley was accustomed, with a military directness, to say to each man, "Go; and he went." With cheerful confidence they confided to him the entire direction of their work, and they readily obeyed his voice. In this work he would not assume to appoint: he asked for volunteers.

The mission that was to be undertaken was not simply a voyage of thousands of miles, which at that day was no inconsiderable enterprise. It was to separate from brethren to whom they had become endeared by the strongest ties of fraternal attachment, and to assume responsibilities in a new land, with the certainty of perplexities and trials incident to the duties of an infant church in an untried field. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Conference sat for a while in silence, and no one responded to the call. It was too great an enterprise to be undertaken without reflection and prayer. But when the Conference convened the next morning, and the question was asked again, "Who will go?" it

was promptly answered. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmore said, "Here we are: send us."

But this was not all. Here were the men, but where were the means? How should the expense be paid? It was then asked further, "Can any thing be done to aid our brethren thither, and to assist the feeble society in New York?" How strange a question to ask, when the Wesleyan societies were over twenty-five thousand dollars in debt, and when most of the members of the Conference had remained single because they were too poor to marry! But Methodism had always been accustomed to give a loaf with its prayers for the poor. The response of the Conference was as heroic as it was generous. They said, "Let us now take a collection among ourselves." Was there ever a nobler proposition from a company of unselfish men?

They sent the missionaries, and with them the collection of *fifty* pounds towards the erection of the new chapel in New York, and gave *twenty* pounds for the outfit and passage of the evangelists! *Three hundred and fifty dollars*, in a Conference collection of poor Methodist preachers, for a mission in America! Truly they were the worthy progenitors of men who, a few years later, in the same city of Leeds, organized the grandest missionary association in the Protestant world!

Richard Boardman was the senior of the two volunteers for America. He had been an itinerant about six years. Wesley says he was "a pious, good-natured, sensible man, greatly beloved by all who knew him." Asbury's estimate of him is, "a kind, worthy, loving man, truly amiable and entertaining, and of a child-like temper." He made preparations to embark immediately for America. An interesting incident is narrated con-

nected with his preaching at the village of Monyash, on his journey to Bristol to embark. His text was the prayer of Jabez, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. In his rustic assembly was a young woman who was awakened by his sermon and converted. Some years after, she married; and, in grateful remembrance of the sermon of Boardman and of her espousals to Christ, she called her first child "Jabez." That child became the famous Jabez Bunting, — a name illustrious in the history of Wesleyan Methodism.

Joseph Pillmore, the associate of Boardman, had been educated at Wesley's Kingswood School, and had been in the itinerancy four years. "He was a man of good courage, commanding presence, much executive skill, and ready discourse." The missionaries, after a tempestuous passage of nine weeks, landed at Gloucester Point, below Philadelphia, Oct. 24, 1869.

The Methodists of the city had heard of their coming, and were prepared to receive them with open arms and loving hearts. With true Methodist zeal, they began preaching at once in the open air. Pillmore's first sermon was from the steps of the State House; and, soon after, he took his stand on the stage prepared for the race-course, and discoursed to four or five thousand people. Methodism had at that time about a hundred members in Philadelphia.

Leaving Pillmore in that city, Boardman, who had been named Wesley's "assistant" in America, went to New York, preaching in different places on his way thither, through New Jersey. He had a hearty reception from the members at "Wesley Chapel." Writing back to Wesley, he says, "Our house contains about seventeen hundred people. About a third part of those

who attend, get in: the rest are glad to hear without. There appears such a willingness in the Americans to hear the Word as I never saw before." From this it appears that Methodism had become quite an attraction in the cosmopolitan city.

The society of Wesley Chapel immediately made provision for the support of its preachers, and resolved that each one should receive *three guineas a quarter for clothing!* Probably it was expected that they would "board round" for food. That which most of all else cheered the young church in New York was the "great awakening" that followed the advent of the missionaries. The members in society were greatly increased. Among these converts was John Mann, who afterward became a preacher of considerable ability, and "supplied the pulpit in New York during the Revolutionary War," while the British held possession of the city.

The missionaries, besides alternating their labors every few months between the two cities, extended them to other places. Pillmore went to Baltimore, and preached there, "standing on the sidewalk;" and "was heard with much interest." They wrote to Wesley to send more men to their assistance, assuring him that "they need not be afraid of wanting the comforts of life; for the people are very hospitable and kind."

Wesley's comprehensive vision already saw great promise in the opening prospect of American Methodism. The frequent letters that he received from this side of the ocean, intensified his interest in the American work. Boardman reported to him that there were already over three hundred members in the societies, and Wesley could not resist the appeals for more men. At the Conference in 1771, he said, "Our brethren in

America call aloud for help: who are willing to go over and help them?" The minds of the Wesleyan itinerants had also become interested in the American mission, and five responded to the call. Two of the respondents only could be spared. Francis Asbury and Richard Wright were chosen. The former was to become the great apostle of Methodism on the Western Continent.

For more than forty years, Asbury was the pre-eminent man in American Methodism. In legislative wisdom and executive talent, in itinerant activity and magnanimity of soul, in a thorough knowledge of human character and an ardent devotion to the cause of his Saviour, he has had very few rivals. We doubt if he ever had a superior. His future life, as the pioneer and leader of Methodism, will bring him frequently before us. Let us, then, briefly ask, Who was Francis Asbury?

His father was an intelligent peasant of Staffordshire, and farmer and gardener to two of the richest families of the parish where he lived. The death of Francis's only sister led his mother to a religious life, and to training him, her only son, with great religious care. He was early sent to school, and obtained a respectable education for one in his circumstances of life. He was awakened to see his condition as a sinner, and began to lead a life of prayer, when only fourteen years old. He sought opportunity to hear many of the leaders of Calvinistic Methodism, and had a strong love for reading their books. The Wesleyan Methodists made a "great stir" in Staffordshire, and were "everywhere spoken against." He asked his mother, "Who and what were the Methodists?" He went, by her advice, to Wednesbury to

hear, and was favorably impressed by them. He said, "The people were so devout, men and women kneeling down, saying 'Amen.' It is certainly a strange way, but the best way." Their preaching led him soon after to the full knowledge of Christ, while praying, in company with a few others, in his father's barn.

After his conversion, he began to exhort, and hold meetings, in his father's house, and presently to preach in the Methodist chapels. "Several professed to find peace through his labors." Thus he continued, widening his circuit, and preaching four or five times a week, until he was twenty-one years old. He was then received into the itinerant ministry. Five years after, he was appointed by Wesley a missionary to America.

The subject of devoting his life to the interest of Methodism in America was not new to Asbury, at the Conference where he was appointed to it. He had heard of the success of Boardman and Pillmore, and his mind had been impressed that it was his duty to join them. This impression became a deep conviction; and, when Wesley called for volunteers, he was the first to respond. Henceforth his heart was in America.

He made a short preaching tour on the circuits where he had labored. He visited his parents; and with mutual tears, and confessions of faith in God and the worthiness of his mission, they bade each other farewell; and he hastened to Bristol to take ship for his distant field of labor. Here he met his associate, Wright, a young man who had been but one year in the ministry, and who appears to have proved of but little importance — especially compared with Asbury — in affecting the future extension and destiny of Methodism in America.

The faith of the early itinerants in the care of God for their temporal necessities was often put to the test. They went out without "scrip or purse," and trusted "the Lord would provide." When Asbury reached Bristol, he had not a penny in his pocket. "Yet," he writes, "the Lord soon opened the hearts of friends, who supplied me with clothes and ten pounds." His voyage taught him something of the hard experience he was to find in his future itinerancy. "He had but two blankets for his bed, and slept with them on the hard boards." His mind was wholly absorbed by his mission to the New World. At times, his solicitude affected him with fear of his success; but he found assurance and hope in saying, "I am convinced that I am doing the will of God."

The missionaries reached Philadelphia, "and were brought in the evening to a large church, where they met a considerable congregation. . The people looked on them with pleasure, hardly knowing how to show their love sufficiently; bidding them welcome with fervent affection, and receiving them as angels of God."

This church was "Old St. George's." The Methodists in Philadelphia, until 1770, had worshipped where they could, — some of the time in private houses or in a rigging loft. In that year they purchased this building. It had been originally built by a German-Reformed Society; but its projectors failed, and the Methodists bought it. Though "for a long time it was unfinished and unfurnished," with plain boards for seats, it was "like a cathedral" to the zealous society of Methodists that worshipped in it. A little later, "it was floored from end to end, and more comely seats were put in, with a new pulpit, like a tall tub on a post." Still

later, another and more fitting pulpit was built. "The house was not plastered till Dr. Coke came to America, and the Methodists were organized into a church." Yet this rude, barn-like structure was a temple of beauty to the earnest, humble, Methodist worshippers. Many redeemed ones found it a Bethel, or gate of heaven, — a palace of delight to their souls. "It was for nearly fifty years the largest place of worship that the Methodists had in America."

It is not our purpose to write "Asbury's journal," although the history of his labors for a few years comprehends much of the real progress of Methodism at that time. Having been refreshed in spirit by his reception from the society, and the interest shown in his preaching in Philadelphia, he started for New York, preaching through New Jersey and on Staten Island. He arrived in New York the 12th of November, and immediately began to preach in Wesley Chapel. Thenceforth his ministrations are frequent, — almost daily.

Asbury was, from principle and from preference, an itinerant, — a true disciple of Wesley. He could not be satisfied to confine his labors to the city. His "roving spirit," as they called it, was not pleasant to some of the members of the society in New York, or to Boardman, whom he found there. But he branched out. His courage sustained his purpose; and he visited Staten Island and Westchester County, and scattered the word of life among the people. In both of these regions he gathered men and women into societies that have had an abiding fame in the history of Methodism. The love of expansion was the ruling passion of his life. He breathed his own spirit into his fellow-laborers to such

an extent as to partially affect all their movements. Itinerancy became the rule; location, the exception.

Asbury met Boardman in Philadelphia the March following, and they mapped out the work for a systematic, comprehensive, itinerancy. The plan adopted for the ensuing year seems like the appointments of a limited Conference, with Wesley at the head. Boardman was to visit Boston; Pillmore was assigned to Virginia; Wright was to go to New York; and Asbury was to be in and about Philadelphia. These cities were to be the *nuclei* of great circuits, embracing provinces. Asbury wrote, "I hope that, before long, about seven preachers of us will spread over seven or eight hundred miles." His hopes were very soon more than realized. He was fast becoming the ruling spirit among both preachers and people. He was inspiring them by his example, by comprehensive plans, by unwearied industry, and by a hearty evangelical itinerancy.

In the autumn of 1772, Wesley appointed Asbury his assistant, or superintendent of the Methodist societies in America. It increased his responsibility, but it did not diminish his zeal. He had his appointment in Philadelphia; but we find him soon after wending his way southward into Maryland, and making Baltimore the headquarters of a vast circuit. He was greatly cheered by the work of God in all that region. If New York was entitled to precedence in time, as the place where Methodism began on the continent, Maryland very soon took the van in the number of its converts,—a place of honor that she has continued to hold. When Asbury visited that State, the fields were white for the harvest. Strawbridge and Williams, with a few native preachers that they had commissioned, had made Mary-

land and a part of Virginia to begin "to bud and blossom as the rose." Among the converts of these men were a few in high social position, eminent men in the communities, who, having embraced the Saviour, made their houses the welcome homes and preaching places for the itinerants.

Methodism has always proved by its history the truth of a great maxim in political economy, that the supply will be in proportion to the demand. This has been especially true in respect to the number and quality of its ministers. It may have arisen from the encouragement given, by the regular itinerants, for every young convert of respectable talents and piety, to "improve" his gifts; or it may have come from the peculiarly social character of the devotional services of Methodism, inspiring confidence in all its members; or it may be the result of their thorough religious experience, awaking solicitude for the salvation of men. Whether from either or all of these causes, it is historically true, that, in every period of Methodism, the more abundant its successes, the more numerous have been the offerings of devoted and capable young men to engage in its ministry. This was remarkably true in Maryland and Virginia. Within five years of its history, a number of ardent spirits were beginning to move to and fro, preaching the "good tidings of the kingdom." For the first fifteen or twenty years of the Methodist movement in this country, this region seems to have been the principal nursery to prepare native preachers for the wide-spreading mission of Methodism. Some of these preachers became eminent men, leading in the front ranks of the advancing militant church.

One cannot fail to find in this rapid increase of native

preachers, a providential interposition for an emergency that was soon to arise in the history of Methodism. They would, it is true, furnish what was greatly needed, the men to supply the increasing circuits that were organized. But there would soon come a crisis, when, but for them, the whole work would cease. In three or four years all of Wesley's missionaries, except Asbury, deserted the societies, and returned to England. The Revolutionary War drove them away. The native helpers were ready to fill their places, and assume the responsibility of guiding the young church through the perilous times.

We have said that Asbury went to Baltimore. Hitherto Methodism had hardly a place in that city, — a city that has since been known as one of its strong citadels. Strawbridge, Williams, and Pillmore had confined their labors more to the rural regions, and had been eminently successful; but they had been but rarely in the city. Occasionally they had preached in its market-place and in the streets; hardly a house was opened to them for preaching or as guests. A few had been awakened and converted. Organized Methodism in Baltimore was very crude. Asbury's arrival was a signal for change. Houses were opened to him: he was kindly entertained. A more capacious "sail-loft" was furnished him for preaching, free of charge, and this was soon filled to overflowing. Methodism began to take form, and to find a permanent place in Baltimore. They needed a good executive leader; and Asbury was the man. He distributed the society into classes, appointed leaders, arranged for them to meet weekly, and henceforth the movement of Methodism in that city was onward.

Baltimore, too, needed a chapel. The necessity for

it was imperative, and Asbury prepared to build one. In November, the zealous "band" laid the foundations for a new church, on Strawberry Alley, on Fell's Point. It is now standing, "the only original edifice of the kind, of religious denomination, in the city." It is now used by the colored people.

The next spring, another was begun in Lovely Lane. The ensuing fall, Captain Webb wrote to Asbury, that "it was so far finished by the middle of October that he preached in it." Both of these churches were very unpretentious in their appearance. The notions of Methodists in those days did not allow of much ornament in dress, equipage, or churches. Though later than New York or Philadelphia in building, Baltimore had now taken the advance, and had two churches to one in either of these cities. It has kept the advance to this day, and has more Methodist churches, in proportion to its population, than any other city on the continent.

An illustration of the extent of labor of a Methodist preacher, in primitive times, is found in Asbury's circuit around Baltimore. It extended two hundred miles, and had twenty-four regular appointments in three weeks! He introduced into it several local preachers and exhorters.

In those times, too, they expected and labored for demonstrative fruits at every meeting. Each class-meeting and prayer meeting and preaching service was looked to as a season for the divine presence, when believers would be comforted and edified, or sinners converted. But the great occasion of all others was the quarterly meeting. Although the services at this meeting were in part advisory or executive, they were mostly devotional, and they were anticipated as a religious festival.

The people came from great distances to enjoy the spiritual festivities. The hospitality of the community where the meeting was held was taxed, and every entertainment furnished for its guests that a generous Christian hand could supply. Asbury always attached great importance to the quarterly meetings. He saw in them — what camp meetings have become in later times — a strong connecting bond to hold in sympathy and fellowship the Methodists of a large extent of country. They have always been, in regions where the population was sparse and Christian intercourse unfrequent, great jubilant seasons in Methodism.

The Wesleyan Conference was appealed to for further assistance for American Methodism. More men were asked for. Captain Webb appeared at the Conference, held again in Leeds, and made the appeal in person. The good soldier's heart was bound up in the success of the cause, and he would not be denied his request. He saw, with a far-reaching vision, the great destiny of this country, and the prominent part that Methodism ought to take in forming that destiny. Tradition says that he asked to have two of the ablest men of the Conference sent here; and, when his request was refused, he went before the Conference, and delivered an address, with such fervor and eloquence that the whole assembly were moved by his appeals. Charles Wesley set him down as fanatical; but John Wesley, and most of the Conference, understood him better, and appreciated the greatness of his soul. They were now ready to respond to his case. The year before, the Wesleyan Conference had recognized the work in America as a part of its own, and reported the number of its members and the preachers that were engaged in it.

They felt now, more than ever, their obligations to meet the demand; and another pair of preachers — Thomas Rankin and George Shadford — were sent hither, — the former to be Wesley's general assistant, in the place of Asbury.

Why Mr. Asbury was displaced, and Rankin appointed "assistant," is a matter of conjecture. It is hardly enough to say, that it was because he was four years Rankin's junior in the ministry: Mr. Wesley was more accustomed to regard qualifications than age; and Asbury was not so young as to be a novice. We think it more likely that Asbury's rigid, almost military, discipline had created some disaffection in the societies, and that his co-laborers, Boardman, Pillmore, and Wright, had regarded him with some disfavor on this account. Probably, too, Captain Webb, though a soldier, in his intense enthusiasm for the progress of the cause, did not wholly agree with Asbury's rigorous notions, and that representations from the others, through him, induced Wesley to make the change.

His successor was not a man inclined to be less severe than Asbury. Perhaps Wesley supposed that a change of administration would relieve the disaffection, and therefore appointed Rankin. Asbury showed the magnanimity and purity of his heart, by receiving Rankin cordially, and co-operating earnestly with him in the execution of his plans.

Rankin was a Scotchman, with all the stateliness and firmness of his nationality. He had been in the Conference eleven years. He had a sound religious experience, and had been very successful on the circuits he had travelled. He was esteemed as a man of good parts, and, withal, a thorough disciplinarian. This last

qualification would suit Wesley; for, though he might wish to quiet any disaffection among preachers or people, he could have no thought of lowering the standard of discipline.

Shadford was different from Rankin; not less pious, but of very cheerful, easy manners. He had been only four years in the itinerancy. He received his appointment with cheerfulness; and, the ensuing spring, both the missionaries left England, with Captain Webb and his wife, for their distant field. Asbury was in Philadelphia to meet and welcome them, as he says, "to his great comfort."

Every thing in American Methodism, under the administration of Wesley's evangelists, took the form of the Wesleyan type. English precedent was not only an example, but authority. Immediately after Rankin's arrival, it was decided to call a Conference. This was Wesleyan. The manner of conducting its business, in the form of question and answer, was strictly after the home pattern, — the same that Wesley had adopted from the beginning. There was, however, more freedom in the discussion of questions, and more individual liberty in their decisions. In the Wesleyan body, after free expression of opinion by its members, the decision of all matters was wholly with Wesley. He was more than umpire: he was authority. At their first Conferences, Wesley's "assistants" preserved a shadow of his authority. But the nature of the work, the equality of the preachers, and the democratic spirit of the country, soon made an American Conference a real deliberative body, where every member had an equal voice, and its decisions the conclusions of a majority.

The first Conference assembled in Philadelphia, July

14, 1773. There were ten members present, — the same number that formed the first Wesleyan Conference in England twenty-nine years before. All the members were from Great Britain. There were reported *eleven hundred and sixty* members in the society. It lasted three days. The most important part of its deliberations was to secure a thorough administration of Wesley's rules in the societies, and an efficient itinerancy in the preachers. It was found, that, in many of the societies, there had been no strict division of the members into classes, and that some of the preachers were inclined to localize their labors. The movement of the Conference to correct these evils, in which Asbury and Rankin agreed, was a very important one. Asbury saw, that, if they were not corrected at once, it might soon be too late to correct them at all, and they would affect disastrously the future history of Methodism in this country.

Two resolutions adopted at this Conference refer to a practice already begun in the southern portion of the work, and which Rankin and Asbury very much opposed, — the administration of the sacraments by some of the preachers. They were both as strict Churchmen as Wesley himself, and could not brook any appearance of independence of the English Church, even in this country. Neither of them saw the impolicy of their views, and the difficulty of practising them among the American people. By the strength of their influence, however, they were able to arrest for a time the practice they deprecated. It was only a suspension, to show itself, a few years later, in a more threatening form.

The Conference met, prayed, counselled, resolved; and the preachers separated for their circuits in peace and love.

It met again in the same city the next year, and the reported members in the societies had nearly doubled. The principal increase came from Maryland and Virginia. Two, who were present at the former Conference, were not reported as present at this. Boardman and Pillmore were about to return to England. There were nine native preachers received; and the thriving church was gathering strength every year, and girding itself for greater conflicts than it had yet met, and for greater victories than it had yet achieved.

The political disaffection of the Colonies towards England was fast ripening to a rupture. It had been increasing and intensifying for ten years, and it required but little gift in political prophecy to foresee the crisis near at hand. All of Wesley's missionaries were strict, if not excessive, loyalists to the English Government; nearly all the American itinerants were patriots. It was, therefore, easily seen, that, in the event of war, the position of these missionaries would be unpleasant and perilous. They saw it, and prepared to escape the peril; and Boardman, Pillmore, and Wright left for England soon after the Conference of 1774. Captain Webb left about a year later; and, in two years more, all of Wesley's missionaries, except Asbury, had deserted their adopted, and returned to their native land. Another class of preachers was to take the field; and, in the Revolutionary War that was to commence, American Methodism was to find new trials, and to obtain new conquests. Let us now look at its progress during the Revolution, under the native preachers.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMERICAN METHODISM. — ITS FIRST NATIVE PREACHERS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

"Without, were fightings; within, were fears."

THE War of the Revolution was the great crisis in American history; and the event was at hand. Three months before the session of the third Methodist Conference in Philadelphia, May 17, 1775, Parliament had declared the colony of Massachusetts in rebellion, and sent troops to suppress it. While that Conference was in session, the people of the colony were gathering stores, and enlisting men to resist the alien troops. In less than one month after that Conference, the battle of Bunker Hill had initiated the war that was to give independence to the thirteen colonies, and establish a free government for a great nation. How was this war to affect the growth and stability of American Methodism?

The political preparation for the war had been in progress for more than ten years before the *dénouement.* Act after act of the British Parliament, oppressive and intolerant, had chafed and irritated the American people to disaffection and alienation; and remonstrances had been made in vain. The colonies were all in sympathy with each other in a common opinion of the injustice and oppression of the parent country, and were ready

for alliance, offensive and defensive, to resist the intolerant acts. It only needed the overt deed, and blood to be shed, to awake the war spirit "from Maine to Georgia."

Political historians give too little credit to the power of the religious element of the colonies as it affected, if it did not produce, the Revolutionary War. Nominally and professionally, the war originated in the determination of the colonists not to be taxed without representation. It was morally favored by the independence, or rather repugnance, of the people towards the Established Church. Had there existed in this country a systematic State religion, with its hierarchy and its *régime* in sympathy with and like to that in England, it may be doubted if the Revolutionary War had ever been provoked, or begun; and, more, it may be doubted if the revolution had ever succeeded. Independence in religion is a sure forerunner of independence in the State. The chief supporters here of the claims of England were the adherents of the English Church. Had all the people been of the same religious proclivities, the Revolutionary War had been a failure. They were, however, mostly "independents." The nominal relation of American Methodism to the English Church created a suspicion of the patriotism of the itinerants, and seriously hindered them in their work.

Nevertheless, Methodism moved onward, right onward, throughout the seven years' struggle, increasing rapidly in its numbers, and coming out of the conflict with five times the number of preachers, and four times the number of members, with which it began. It maintained its vigor and spirituality against the dissipating and demoralizing influences of the war, and preserved

its integrity, without impeachment or dishonor, to the last. But it had its trials, and its denominational relations aggravated them beyond those of most of the other Christian sects of the country.

First, Methodism was in a comparatively *unestablished* condition: it was in an initial state. It had indeed begun to attract attention for two or three years, because of the great number of its converts in the central colonies; and a disposition had entered the public mind to speculate on its religious claims; but it had not obtained the influence in society which age and position secure. The tree, though growing thriftily, was too young to have struck its roots deeply and immovably into the soil of American society. Moreover, its converts were not generally among the influential classes of the communities; but few of them were controlling spirits in the agitated political affairs of the colonies. Methodism could therefore expect but little moral protection or favor, to enable it to withstand the prejudices and suspicions that were raised against it because of its supposed affinity with the English cause. It had but few influential friends at the "patriots' court."

Methodism was chiefly embarrassed with the common imputation that its chief preachers were Tories. Nine-tenths of its itinerants were of foreign birth, and were supposed, and probably with good reason, to sympathize with the English side of the contest. It did not matter that they followed a prudent course, and did not generally avow their sympathy; that they devoted their whole time and ability to preaching Christ, and to the salvation of souls. It was generally interpreted, that whoever was not positively committed to the cause of the patriots, was really against it; and their silence, or lack of committal, made them suspected.

"Like priest, like people," is an adage that is commonly, if not always, true, — an adage that is, at least, commonly believed. The suspicion of loyalty in the foreign-born itinerants was applied, without reason, to the Methodist people generally, and to the native preachers that were in the work. This was without cause; and many of them had to suffer the unjust persecutions they received from the cry of "Tory."

Opposition to Methodists, and especially to its preachers, was intensified by the known loyalty of Wesley to the British crown. He was both leader and authority to the denomination. He had issued a "Calm Address to the American Colonies," censuring their resistance to the British Government, and maintaining the right of England to tax the colonies.*

This address was satirized and quite extensively circulated by the enemies of Methodism. His missionaries were represented as agreeing with the sentiments of his address. One of them, in Maryland, was found circulating the king's proclamation, and compelled to flee to the British lines for safety. The feelings of hostility to the Methodist societies, in some places, became so bitter that their organizations were destroyed, and in many places the preachers could not safely appear. Would the infant church outride the storm?

Humanly speaking, it would seem that the desertion of American Methodism by all except one of the men who

* It is but justice to Wesley to say, that, immediately after hearing of the battle of Lexington, he addressed a note to Lord North, and to the Earl of Dartmouth, deprecating the course pursued by the British Government towards the Colonies; declaring that he thought they were an "oppressed people, asking for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner;" and giving his opinion that the war against them would be a severe and probably hopeless one for England. Had these private letters been circulated with his "Calm Address," they would probably have neutralized its influence, and prevented much of the persecution against the Methodist societies in America. But they were private.

had founded it, would have proved fatal to its progress, if not to its life. But God was in the storm, and "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb." One after another of Wesley's missionaries fled the country. Asbury was faithful to his trust. He would not, dare not leave it. The man of all others who was best qualified for this emergent period of Methodism remained true to it. Shadford — the zealous Shadford, and successful preacher — was the last that left. It was a grief to Asbury to part with him; but the lone Englishman, with apostolic heroism, said, "Our friends here appear to be distressed above measure at the thoughts of being forsaken by the preachers. I am determined, by the grace of God, not to leave them, let the consequence be what it may." These noble words furnish us with a true exponent of the conscientious, resolute, and devout character of Asbury.

The members of the societies and some of the itinerants suffered from the exactions of the test-oath. This was required of all suspected of favoring the Tory side; and the malice of the enemies of Methodism found it an easy method of indulging their hatred. The Methodists were generally patriots at heart, and some did not scruple to enlist in the colonial army. A few of them however, believed more in praying than fighting: they could not in conscience bear arms. When called to take the test-oath, in which they were requested to vow to be ready to arm at the call of the colony, they refused. It caused them much persecution, and sometimes imprisonment. The preachers did not wholly escape its inconvenience.

We regard the departure of Wesley's missionaries at this time as a good providence. To the feeble societies

it seemed adverse; but these men had fulfilled their mission. They had organized the societies under a religious discipline that was well adapted as the foundation for their future success. Their affinities with the mother country, and especially their affinities with the English Church, would have been a bar to their future usefulness. It was better that another and a different class of men should take their places, — men whose sympathies and antecedents gave them better qualifications for the duties of the hour and the demands of the times. Providence dealt graciously with the imperilled and feeble church. These men were not less devoted than their predecessors to the cause of their Master. They were also of "one heart and mind" in respect to the great principles involved in the revolutionary struggle. They were *American;* and it identified them with the forming institutions of the country, and enabled them to adapt future Methodism to the wide field that was opening before it.

Whatever were Asbury's personal views or feelings respecting the contest between England and America, his prudence in expressing them is worthy of praise. Probably, at the beginning of the strife, he sympathized with his native country; but he wisely refrained from avowing it. He was grieved that war in any way should interfere with the progress of the cause of God; and he was so intensely given to the work of "saving souls," and his heart was so "bound up" in his itinerant mission, that any seeming impediment to these occasioned him great discomfort. He therefore wished, above all else, to pursue a course so uncommitted in political affairs that he might preach on; and, whatever might be the issue of the pending strife, he desired not to be embarrassed in his subsequent labors for the cause of Meth-

odism. Had he not had such strong attachment to American Methodism, and felt such great responsibility to abide its fortunes, it is not unlikely he would have returned to England with his brethren. But he said to Shadford, whom he dearly loved, who believed that he had received an answer to prayer that it was his duty to return, "If you are called to go, I am called to stay. So here we must part."

Notwithstanding all the embarrassments with which Methodism entered the dark cloud of the Revolution, it moved forward to accomplish its great work of spreading scriptural holiness over the land, undiverted and unhindered. Every year rapidly increased its numbers, and gave new inspiration and strength to its labors.

The Middle and Southern colonies were the principal field of the operations of Methodism. For the whole period of the war, Methodism went *backward* in both New York and Philadelphia. The former city was in the possession of the British during the war, and the latter city during the early part of it. When peace was restored, New York was reduced to sixty members, and Philadelphia to one hundred and twenty. Depletion or devastation affected a few societies in other places, chiefly at the North. But in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina the work went gloriously on.

As if the Lord designed it for an earnest of what was to follow, and to give assurance that even the distractions of war should not impede the onward march of Methodism, an unprecedented and great revival transpired in Virginia and North Carolina during the year following the Conference in 1775. There were revivals in other parts, but this one far exceeded all the others in extent and in the remarkable physical phenomena that at-

tended it. It swept through many counties of these States like fire over the prairies, and in two years reported a harvest of over two thousand subjects gathered into the Methodist societies. It took such hold of the public mind where it prevailed, that the intense agitations and fears of the war struggle could not impede its progress.

Robert Williams had been the pioneer of Methodism in Virginia. At the last Conference, he had returned nearly a thousand members organized into classes and circuits. George Shadford, with four "helpers," had been sent to Brunswick, the principal circuit of the State, extending from Petersburg southward. Asbury was appointed to Norfolk. The revival began soon after they reached their destined fields. Jesse Lee, who was an eye-witness of its effects, characterized it "as the most remarkable reformation ever known, perhaps, in country places, in so short a time." Many of the planters who were living debased lives, and were half heathen in their ignorance of a religious life, were brought to a saving knowledge of God.

It was wonderfully demonstrative in its physical effects. Men and women would fall down powerless during the preaching. Some of them, while helpless in body, would pray and cry aloud for mercy. Believers would become so enraptured that they would shout and sing, and could not be restrained. Rankin visited Shadford, and preached at one of the meetings. He was a great *stickler* for order, and had never seen it after this fashion. He says, "I was obliged to stop again and again, and beg the people to compose themselves. But they could not: some on their knees and some on their faces were crying mightily to God all the time I was

preaching." The subject of the revival and of experimental religion was the absorbing theme of conversation through many counties of the State. Lee says, "It increased on every side. New preachers were soon wanted; and the Lord raised up several young men, who were exceedingly useful as local preachers. I might write a volume on this subject, and then leave the greater part untold."

It was not a mere "winter" or "six weeks'" revival, but continued through the ensuing year. At the Conference in 1777, there were over four thousand members on the various circuits of Virginia and North Carolina, — nearly two-thirds of all the members in all the Methodist societies in the United States.

We have said that this great revival was given to the anxious young churches as an earnest of what they might expect the Lord would do for them in the future. They needed such a bow of promise to inspire and cheer them. The Conference assembled in Philadelphia had just received the startling intelligence that blood had been spilt in the conflict between the king's troops and the minute men at Concord and Lexington; and its members were oppressed by the dark political cloud that hung all round the horizon. They had appointed "a general fast for the prosperity of the work, and the peace of America." They had knelt together, and with unusual fervor joined in praying before parting that God would preserve them and bless them in their labors, and save the feeble societies from the demoralizing effects of war. With saddened but hopeful hearts they had separated to their various circuits, determined to be true to their high mission, and "have faith in God." As the news of this great revival came to each of the itinerants

during the year, it seemed as the message of God, saying, "Fear not, nor be dismayed: I the Lord will do it."

The young itinerants of those days have left us but few "Diaries" or "Journals" of what they did and saw. Such narratives would have contained accounts of scenes of exciting interest. They would have given us the best descriptions of the domestic and religious habits of their times, for no men had better opportunity to be acquainted with these than the early Methodist preachers. But they were chiefly anxious to make their record on the "fleshly tables" of the heart: they lived with the sole intent of saving the people. The history of most of them, besides a short line in the obituary column of the "Minutes," saying that they lived, labored, succeeded, and died, is confined to the fragrant memory of their deeds, perpetuated by tradition, through their spiritual children.

We have, however, brief records of a few of them. Dr. Stevens, in his "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church," has done a good service to their memories, and given us brief narratives of some of them. We cannot read them without being impressed by the truth that it was a marvellous interposition of the Divine Hand, that raised up so many and such men to meet the peculiar exigencies of the church and the nation at that day. *William Watters* was the first native Methodist itinerant in America. His talents, zeal, and piety entitled him to rank among the first of his brethren. He was a native of Baltimore County, Md., and began an itinerant life at the age of twenty-one, in 1772. He went first with Williams to Norfolk, Va., and was received the next year in the first American Conference. For ten years, he travelled circuits in the various parts of his

native State and Virginia. Every year, during that time, he reported "an increase" as the fruit of his labors. In some places, there were extensive revivals. He gave his entire soul to the great mission of his life. He says, "I never, since I knew the Lord, saw any thing worth living for an hour, but to prepare, and assist others to prepare, for that glorious kingdom which shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He was held in very high esteem among his brethren. At the Conference held in Kent County, Del., in 1779, when the exciting controversy about the sacraments threatened to separate the Northern from the Southern portion of the church, Watters was delegated, with Asbury and Garrettson, to visit the Southern Conference in Virginia, and, if possible, prevent the threatened rupture. It was doubtless owing to his influence that the evil was averted. "The family to which he belonged was, perhaps, one of the most remarkable in the early annals of American Methodism. There were seven brothers and two sisters. They were among the first whose hearts and homes were opened to receive the Methodist preachers in Harford County, Md. Several of the brothers became official members of the Methodist societies. The old homestead still remains with a descendant of the family, and is venerated from its associations as the place where Pillmore, Boardman, Coke, and Asbury often lodged and prayed."

Baltimore County has the honor of furnishing another of the earliest native preachers in American Methodism: *Philip Gatch* was a noble contribution to the itinerant ranks. He joined the Conference in 1774. The late Judge McLean, of the Supreme Court of the United States, who was intimately acquainted with him, says,

"He had deep piety, fervent zeal, and an excellent natural capacity; and these were the only qualifications he had when he began to preach." He travelled circuits in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. His excessive service and great exposure impaired his health, and he was compelled to retire from the itinerancy at the end of the fifth year. He was naturally an amiable, loving man, but he became frequently the victim of violent persecutions for the sake of his Master. After residing a few years in Powhattan County, Va., preaching as his health allowed in the regions round about, he moved with his family to the western country, and helped to lay the foundations of Methodism in the West. The Judge says, "Gatch showed traits of character eminently calculated to meet the exigencies of the times. He had great firmness and perseverance, and was ready to suffer and die for the truth." He died in 1835.

There has never been a class of men to whom the words of Paul — diversity of gifts but the same spirit — would better apply than to the early Methodist preachers. They began to preach with the endowments of nature, made tributary to the promptings and purposes of the Holy Spirit. Some were "polished shafts," others were "rough ashlers." None of them were more "like himself," and more unlike his brethren, than *Benjamin Abbott.* By nature he was constituted to be a very good man or very bad, as he was controlled by the Divine Spirit or the spirit of evil, — a rude, mighty, resolute man.

He was converted in 1772, when forty years of age. His contest for the mastery over the powers of darkness was desperate and severe, but his victory was complete. He immediately joined the Methodists, and began in

his manner to preach to his neighbors, without a formal introduction to the ministry. He did not join the Conference until 1789; but he was not less an itinerant than any of its members, especially in his own State of New Jersey. Here was his vast circuit, and he was the chief instrument in preserving the spiritual life of its societies during the distracting period of the Revolutionary War. His style was unique, and has been well characterized as "a loving compulsiveness, a saintly terror, and a godly bluntness." Whenever he preached, he expected a "demonstration of the Spirit:" he liked a "holy storm." The sword of the Spirit in his hands was sharp and two-edged, and he gave it a direct thrust that could not well be parried. He was called the "slaying preacher," referring to the fact that usually many would fall to the floor under the power of his word. Few men, even in the itinerant ranks, did more service, had more converts, or were more beloved, than Benjamin Abbott.

We can only devote a line or two in brief notices of a few other men who entered the itinerant ministry during the exciting times of the Revolution, — of men who, directly or indirectly, gave character to American Methodism.

The first is *Francis Poythress*. From a dissipated youth he became a zealous itinerant, and for many years was a representative man in its ranks. In 1783 he introduced Methodism into Kentucky, and was associated with its struggles and successes in that State.

Caleb Pedicord was "one of the saintliest men of his age." He joined the conference in 1777 He was a remarkably gifted speaker, and famous as "the sweet singer of Israel." Whether singing or speaking, he moved his hearers with irresistible power.

John Tunnell was received in Conference the same year. Lee says "his gifts as a preacher were great." After doing valiant service in Maryland and Virginia for ten years, he was sent with four others into what was called the Holstein country, now East Tennessee, and helped to initiate and establish Methodism in that new region.

He had an intimate friend and companion, to whom he was joined as the soul of David to Jonathan, — *William Gill.* Dr. Rush said that Gill "was the greatest divine he had ever heard." He was esteemed "the most profound, the most philosophic mind, in the Methodist ministry." He wrought at his holy calling for eleven years, and died like "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

John Dickens also joined the Conference in 1777 He was the only liberally educated man in the ranks of American itinerancy. He is described as "one of the greatest and best men of that age. As it was said of Whitefield, he preached like a lion." He was a Paul among the preachers. He can never be forgotten; for his monument remains: he was the founder of the great publishing house of the church, — the "Book Concern;" lending the money to the Conference to publish the first books of the "Concern," and acting gratuitously as its agent.

Nelson Reed joined the Conference in 1779, assisted in the organization of the church in 1784, was one of its first elders, travelled forty-five years in effective service, lived twenty-five years on the retired list a life of unblemished reputation, and died in 1840, the oldest Methodist preacher in the world. He united, with great meekness, the most indomitable courage.

These few men, so imperfectly sketched, are types of three score more who joined themselves to the ministry of American Methodism after the breaking out of the "War of Independence," and before its close. One can hardly read the records that have come down to us respecting them, scanty and scattered as they are, without saying to himself, "There were giants in those days." These hardy itinerants, without education save that which most of them found in some rustic school, without any patronage derived from social position, with an entire abnegation of self and worldly prospects, with the certainty of meeting contempt and persecution at every step, with hardly "scrip or purse" for immediate necessities, cast themselves on the care and favor of God, and with only their native genius, and guided by the Spirit Divine, began a work, the greatness of which the world has not fully conceived, and the glorious end of which the world shall never see. Who can reflect on what they did so wisely and well, and not be moved to say, "It was the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes"? or who is there of their followers that does not rejoice that "our fathers labored, and we have entered into their labors"?

But what was Asbury, the lone Englishman, deserted by his countrymen, doing during these civil commotions and ecclesiastical struggles. He determined to abide by the flock that he had helped gather, and wrote to Rankin, who was about to leave, "It would be an everlasting dishonor to the Methodists, that we should leave three thousand souls, who desire to commit themselves to our care; therefore I am determined, by the grace of God, not to leave them, let the consequence be what it may." He adhered to his vow. The first two years of

the war found him hard at work, first in Virginia and next in Philadelphia and New Jersey. The war, though making sad havoc in some of the societies, did not prevent him from travelling quite extensively, and preaching without much interruption. In the latter part of 1777, he was on the Baltimore circuit; and here his troubles began. He was required to take the test-oath of Maryland, and swear that he would be ready to bear arms in the patriot cause at the call of the authorities. He was a non-combatant, and could not conscientiously do it; and he looked about for a place of safety till the war-cloud should be passed. He found one in the house of his friend, Judge White, of Kent County, Del. In this State the oath was not required of clergymen. Here for nearly two years he abode, secluded, if not secreted, from his enemies and from intercourse with most of his friends. From this retreat he corresponded with some of the preachers, occasionally venturing out, and preaching in the neighborhood, and once, at least, held a Conference with a limited number of his brethren. But his confinement chafed him; his spirit was eager to be abroad on its great mission; he longed to go again among the societies, and preach the word with an itinerant's freedom. In 1780 he ventured from his retirement, like a bird loosed from its cage; and thenceforth he journeyed much and labored unceas-unceasingly.

For a few years of this period, American Methodism had great internal peril. The old sacramental question came up anew, and in larger proportions than ever. It tested the cohesive strength and integrity of the growing church, and showed, in the settlement of the controversy, the Christian magnanimity of a majority of the preachers.

While Wesley's missionaries were a majority, or had controlling influence in the Conference, the question of adhesion to the English Church was quite an easy subject to manage. From the first Conference in 1773 to 1778, the decision of that Conference in respect to it had been followed with few exceptions. The preachers "had strictly avoided administering the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper." But there had come a great change in the material of the Conference and in the influence that controlled it. Rankin, Wesley's "duly appointed assistant," had left. Asbury, whose moral influence would have been great if permitted to mingle with his brethren, was in seclusion, and had no official authority to dictate in the matter. About thirty preachers had joined the itinerant company with the independence and spirit of Americans. It was natural that they should think, and thinking show, that the increasing societies ought not to be dependent for the ordinances on the capricious administration of the ministers of other denominations; and the disturbing question broke out anew.

At the Conference at Leesburg, Va., in 1778, the "sacramental question" came up, and was fully discussed: it had been laid over from the preceding Conference to this, and was therefore a legal subject for discussion. Watters, who presided at this Conference, says "it found many advocates. It was with considerable difficulty that a large majority were prevailed on to lay it over again till the next Conference, hoping that we should, by that time, be able to see our way more clear in so important a change." It is not surprising that a "large majority" were unwilling to defer action, even "for a year." The Methodists had hitherto de-

pended for the sacraments almost entirely on the ministers of the English Church; but these, before the war, were chiefly confined to Virginia, and since the war nearly all of them had left the country. With only two or three exceptions, those that remained were "worldly men," whose lives were a reproach to the ministry, and the members of the societies were unwilling to receive the sacraments from them. The Methodist people were in the anomalous condition of a church without the ordinances, and their children were growing up unbaptized. There were over seven thousand members in the societies, desiring to enjoy the full privileges of a scriptural church. The itinerants and the people could not comprehend why the men whom God had honored in gathering so many sheep to the fold should be prohibited from feeding them with the bread that the great Shepherd had provided. The war, too, had destroyed all sympathy with the pretentious authority of the English Church. Very naturally, these zealous itinerants who said, with Wesley, "Church or no church, we must save souls," would be reluctant to defer their duty, and to withhold the sacraments for a year longer; but for peace and harmony they did, and laid the matter over another year.

The next Conference met at Fluvanna, Va., and the members came together "full of the ordinances." A large majority of the ministers of the church were present. Lee says, "They concluded, that, if God had called them to preach the gospel, he had called them also to administer the ordinances. They chose a committee for the purpose of ordaining ministers." This committee, after ordaining each other, ordained such members of the Conference as desired it.

Most of the preachers north of Virginia, with Asbury at their head, were sternly opposed to the action of the Conference at Fluvanna, and they formally and rather assumingly declared it. Anticipating the session in Virginia, Asbury called an informal Conference, a month before, in his retreat at Judge White's. It was composed wholly of preachers north of Virginia; and in answer to the question, "Shall we guard against a separation from the church directly or indirectly?" it said, emphatically, "By all means."

Thus the matter stood. The preachers southward went out from their Conference, preaching during the year with great success, and administering the sacraments to the delight and profit of the people. The preachers northward determined to have no fellowship with them, and alienation and independence affected both parties. It was a critical, perilous state of affairs. The young church, growing with unprecedented vigor, notwithstanding the opposition of the world and the destructions of war, was to prove its cohesive force, and determine whether magnanimity and concession would preserve its integrity. The ensuing year decided it.

The Conference at Fluvanna adjourned to meet at Manakintown, Va., in May, 1780. Asbury called a Conference of the Northern preachers at Baltimore in April, and came forth from his retreat to attend it. The feeling at this latter Conference was strongly against the action of the Southern Conference the year before. It said, "We disapprove the step our brethren have taken in Virginia: we look upon them no longer as Methodists, in connection with Mr. Wesley and us, till they come back;" and appointed a delegation to attend the ensuing Southern Conference, and endeavor to restore their erring brethren.

The members of the South came together with a confirmed assurance that they had acted wisely and rightly. Great revivals had attended the labors of the year. There was great unanimity in the societies, and great rejoicing in the ordinances. These were regarded as the divine approval of their action; and they were naturally disinclined to listen to the terms of the Baltimore commission, and to disavow their previous action. All hope of reconciliation seemed to have departed. It appeared as if henceforth the people, hitherto so united in spirit, and allied by a common sentiment and practice, were to be divided into two bands, alienated and distracted by dissensions, and Methodism to be broken apart. But God had a great work for a united church to accomplish, and did not permit the division to come. Asbury and his associates of the Baltimore delegation were about to bid farewell, perhaps finally, to the Southern Conference, when one of its members proposed "that there should be a suspension of the ordinances for the present year, and the circumstances of the case should be laid before Mr. Wesley, and his advice solicited." It was a noble proposition for a concession, and readily agreed to by most of the Conference. The cloud of darkness and peril broke. Watters preached, and "they held a love-feast. It was an affecting and glorious time. Preachers and people talked and wept and sung and shouted. The spirit of dissension was effectually laid, and the Methodist community throughout America was yet one and inseparable."

From this time to the close of the war, and to the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in 1784, Methodism, as societies associated with the Wesleyan connection, increased in numbers, extended its domain,

adopted measures such as its economy and prosperity required, built up the waste places devastated by the war, "lengthening its cords and strengthening its stakes."

What wonders had it achieved! The Conference of 1775 numbered *nineteen* preachers; and they ministered over ten circuits, with about *three thousand members.* In nine years the itinerant company had increased to *eighty-three,* and the circuits had multiplied to *forty-six,* with nearly *fifteen thousand* members, and at least *fifty thousand* regular attendants on the Methodist ministry. Its geographical limits extended from New York and Long Island on the North into South Carolina and Georgia on the South, and reached out westward to the limits of emigration in the newly settled portions of the Holstein country, beyond the Alleghanies. All these evidences of progress had been attained while war had kept the country in a state of agitation unfavorable for attention to religious things, and the minds of the people were in social and political unrest, and while all other religious denominations were diminished in numbers, and deranged in their organizations. Verily it was "the Lord's doings;" and this, of all others, was the heroic age of American Methodism.

CHAPTER IX.

ORGANIZATION OF THE METHODIST-EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

"With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands."

WE come now to an eventful period in the history of American Methodism, — its organization as an independent church. It was well that this organization took place when it did, and that it was brought about by the agencies that united to effect it. The Methodism of this country could not have long preserved an efficient connectional unity in the incomplete state in which it existed prior to 1784.

The loving devotion of the preachers to their great work of saving souls, and the loving Christian experience of the members, had hitherto proved a sufficient bond to keep them both from being seriously affected by any influences sufficiently powerful to destroy the harmony of what was really only a *domestic religious association.* But it could not be expected that either preachers or people would be content to remain much longer in such an *inchoate* ecclesiastical state, — a state that recognized the former as wanting the full functional qualities of the ministry, and that deprived the latter of the right and advantages of Christian sac-

raments. The wonder is that they remained quiet as long as they did. It can only be accounted for by the great personal influence of Asbury, who, as Wesley's general assistant, travelled through the connection, and persuaded both preachers and people to abide by, if not to adopt, his own views of the expediency of remaining in affinity with the English Church.

Then, too, the connectional bond that held the Methodist societies together was more in the spirit than in the letter. Ecclesiastical supervision was more an arrangement of temporary mutual consent than any constitutional or organic authority. Doctrines, rules, and administration depended on precedent rather than on law. Disaffection, had it come from any quarter, would have seriously imperilled the whole connection with sectional dismemberment. The more widely the *religious association* extended, the greater would be its danger from division, and the weaker its conserving power to prevent it.

With all our sympathy with the advocates for the right to administer the sacraments, in the controversy in 1779, we now see that it was well ordered that they did not persist in the exercise of their rights, and that they waited a better dispensation. Had they insisted, and organized a church on the basis they proposed to adopt, it would be found much more liable than the present system to impeachment by the Churchmen, and to the charge that they had built on the doubtful validity of *lay ordination.*

It was well that Wesley moved first in the matter, and gave direction and authority to the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. Had the movement originated with the American preachers, — which

would seem to have been the most probable way, — especially if it had been adverse to his wish or approval, the weight of his influence and his disfavor would have made it hardly possible to organize a church without serious divisions. It is almost certain, that, with Wesley's disapproval, Asbury would have opposed it, and the attempted organization would have proved a calamity rather than a blessing.

We think that the provision made by Wesley for the establishment of a complete and independent Methodist church on this continent was the greatest and noblest work he ever did. When has it ever happened that a man beyond fourscore years has had the courage and decision to devise and execute a measure that seemed to be in direct opposition to all the antecedents of his life? When has a man of that age shown such perfect understanding of the "logic of events," and, by a wise, liberal, and comprehensive Christian policy, given the influence of his name and office to direct these events for the salvation of so many souls? Had he gone a step farther, and given at the same time to his home connection what he did for the American, — a valid ordination to its ministry, — it would have been the crowning act of his life, and have entitled him to the honor of being the wisest and greatest ecclesiastical legislator of modern times. He would have saved the Wesleyan body from those perilous controversies that afflicted it as soon as his body was laid in the grave.

To the time of the ordination and appointment of Dr. Coke as superintendent of American Methodism, Mr. Wesley had strictly adhered to his original design of reviving spiritual religion *in* the Church: he had strenuously opposed all separation *from* it. To the day

of his death he was a Churchman. His adhesion to the Church was from partiality, not from bigotry. When, therefore, he saw that it was both impolitic and impossible to retain the Methodist societies in America within the nominal jurisdiction of the Establishment, his life-long partiality yielded to his convictions of duty. He saw that the English Church in America had become defunct, and that the political independence of the United States would necessarily dissolve all the ecclesiastical connections of this country with England, and that the filial relations of the Methodist societies here must be seriously loosened, if not severed, from the parent Wesleyan connection. He decided to adopt such measures as would make the severance without alienation, and preserve the two American bodies in close fraternal alliance.

The desire of his American brethren to be put in a position in keeping with their new *civil state* was frequently represented to Wesley; and he determined, deliberately, to gratify it. How could it be done?

Originally he was a High Churchman. He held opinions of what was a valid ordination, only a little lower than the teachings of Romanism itself. But these opinions had long since given way to the conviction, that the pretended apostolic succession was a "fable." He now believed, and for years had taught, that, from Scripture and from the practice of the primitive church, presbyters had a right to ordain others to equal authority with themselves in the church of God. He had therefore no scruples in respect to his power to ordain men for the American church.

Wesley had good reasons to believe, that, if he sent men ordained and appointed to organize the Methodist soci-

eties in America into a separate church, it would not only be accepted by these societies, but that they would be pleased, from his relation to them, to have him inaugurate the measure. He decided to do it, and to ordain a superintendent and elders to accomplish it. Who should be chosen?

John Wesley was a remarkably good judge of human character. He seemed to have an intuitive knowledge of men, and of their adaptation to any particular work. His success as a leader was often attributable to this valuable gift. In selecting Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury to supervise the new organization in America, he showed how well he knew his men, and their fitness for the work they had to do. Better men could not have been chosen.

Dr. Coke was prepared for his new office by learning and genius, by an almost unmeasured philanthropy, unrestrained activity, and an unquestionable religious experience. To these might be added, what was not so essential as often convenient, large pecuniary resources, which he devoted with a lavish hand to advance the various interests of Methodism.

Coke was the only child of wealthy parents. He was born at Brecon, Wales, in 1747, and educated at Jesus' College, Oxford. He became, soon after leaving college, while a sincere but unregenerate man, minister of Petherton Parish, in Somersetshire, England. By the teaching of one of Wesley's lay preachers, he learned "better views of evangelical Christianity." By the aid of an humble Methodist class-leader, he became acquainted with the way of salvation by Christ. A clamor was raised against him in his parish, because "he was too zealous a Methodist." He was dismissed by his rector,

and threatened to be mobbed by his parishioners, and compelled to leave his place. The bells of his church chimed, and the people held a rejoicing when he left town. Dr. Stevens says, "Petherton celebrated as a jubilee its deliverance from a Methodist curate; but it gave to the world a man who was to rank second only to Wesley in the history of Methodism, and to be the first Protestant bishop of the New World. In later years the Petherton bells were to ring again for him as he flew over the country, one of its greatest evangelists, — ring for him a hearty welcome to his old pulpit."

In 1776, Coke united himself to Wesley and Methodism; and Wesley found him "a man after his own heart." Very soon he placed him in positions of great responsibility. He was stationed in London; appointed to preside over the Irish Conference; and commissioned to travel at large through the connection, and regulate the societies. In all these he honored himself, and proved, by his zeal and courteous manners and by his great executive tact, his qualifications for the mission to which he was soon to be appointed.

When Wesley decided to give a separate organic form to American Methodism, his mind immediately fixed on Dr. Coke as the right man to carry out his designs. He wrote to the doctor, asking his acceptance of the office that he proposed him to take. After two months' consideration of the proposal, Dr. Coke agreed to accept it; and the parties met at the Conference, in Leeds, to consummate the preparations, to initiate the movement, and make the Methodist societies of America a Methodist-Episcopal Church.

One cannot carefully study the details of Wesley's plan, without being impressed with the wisdom and pru-

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dence manifested in it, nor without seeing that he comprehended the greatness of his undertaking. He anticipated also the objections that captious minds would make to his course. To answer these objections, he prepared an address to the Methodist societies in America, and stated the reasons of his action. This address is a model of didactic style; and, in its plain, logical, sound reasoning, is a true type of the clear and honest mind and heart of John Wesley.

It must be borne in mind, that, when Wesley wrote this address, he was *eighty-one* years old; yet we have never found, in the many attempts that have been made in defence of his course, such concise and conclusive arguments to justify it, such proof of the validity of his ordinations, and such a complete vindication of the responsibility he assumed, as we find in his own "Address." It ought to be preserved in every work pretending to speak of the history of Methodism. He says, "By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the British Empire, and erected into independent States. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them,—partly by the Congress, partly by the State Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice; and, in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch:—

"Lord King's 'Account of the Primitive Church' convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same

right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right by ordaining a part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church, to which I belong.

"But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers; so that, for some hundred miles together, there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end, and I conceive myself at full liberty; as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

"I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper.

"If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present, I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"It has indeed been proposed, to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers in America. But to this I object. 1st, I desired the Bishop of London to ordain one only, but could not prevail. 2d, If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3d, If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4th, As our American brethren are now totally

disentangled from both the State and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free."

Wesley's arrangements, to consummate what we have called the great work of his life, were completed; and he called Rev James Creighton and Dr. Coke, both of whom were presbyters of the Church of England, to Bristol. Assisted by them, Wesley ordained Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat — two of his preachers — deacons, and then elders. The day following, with the assistance of Messrs. Creighton, Whatcoat, and Vasey, he ordained Dr. Coke for the office of Superintendent, or Bishop, of the Methodist Church in America.

There have been many more imposing ordination services than this, more *Te Deums* and genuflexions, more elaborate responses and formal rituals; but a more important one, more simple and sincere, more scriptural and primitive, had not taken place since the day when the Church at Antioch obeyed the voice of the Holy Ghost, and separated Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto it had called them, and, by fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands, sent them away; or when Timothy received the *gift* given him "by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

The little band, commissioned with powers and duties that were to largely affect the religious interest of the new nation and the new church, left Bristol on the morning of Sept. 18, 1784. They arrived in New York Nov. 3. The brethren of Wesley Chapel received and entertained them cordially. John Dickens, the preacher, on learn-

ing the particular design of Dr. Coke and his associates in coming to this country, "rejoiced with exceeding joy." In a few days the *three ordained Methodists* of America started southward, to meet Mr. Asbury. They stayed a short time in Philadelphia, and passed on to Barratt's Chapel, in Maryland. They arrived at the time of a quarterly meeting, and quite a number of preachers were present; and Dr. Coke preached. He describes the impression made on his mind at this service: "It was the best season I ever knew, except one in Charlemont, in Ireland. In the midst of the forest I had a noble congregation. After the sermon, a plain, robust man came up to me in the pulpit, and kissed me. I thought it could be no other than Mr. Asbury, and I was not deceived." A spectator, Rev. Ezekiel Cooper says, "The other preachers, at the same time, were melted into sympathy and tears. The congregation also caught the glowing emotion; and the whole assembly, as if struck with a shock of heavenly electricity, burst into a flood of tears. Every heart appeared overflowing with love and fellowship, and an ecstasy of joy and gladness ensued."

Asbury had come hither, and arrived during the sermon; perhaps hoping, but hardly expecting, to meet with Dr. Coke. We can judge how little he knew of the object of the doctor's visit from what he says: "I was greatly surprised to see Brother Whatcoat assist, by taking the cup in the administration of the sacrament. I was shocked, when first informed of the intention of these brethren in coming to this country. It may be of God."

A brief conference of the preachers present was held, and it was decided to call a general Conference of all

the preachers, at Baltimore. Freeborn Garrettson "was sent off like an arrow from north to south, and directed to send messengers to the right and left, and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore, on Christmas eve."

The memorable Christmas Conference drew near. The preachers, startled by the intelligence from Garrettson of the object of its meeting, hastened thither with some anxiety, but more of hope, to be present at the great event. The members of the societies to whom the word speedily spread, that they were to be no longer semi-aliens to full church privileges, heard the news with gladness and thanksgiving. Coke, Asbury, Vasey, and Whatcoat spent the week before preparing for the session of Conference, at Perry Hall,—the elegant mansion of Henry D. Gough, a wealthy and devoted Methodist, about fifteen miles from Baltimore.

On the morning of the 24th of December, the Conference began. Garrettson had been swift as "the arrow," and gathered together *sixty* of the eighty-three American preachers, each one intensely solicitous that this special convention might prove a glorious event in their beloved Methodism. The Conference was held in Lovely-lane Chapel,—a significant name for such an occasion and such a company.

Dr. Coke opened the session by reading Mr. Wesley's letter to the American societies. "It was agreed," says Mr. Asbury, "to form ourselves into an Episcopal Church, and to have superintendents, elders, and deacons." We have said that Wesley appointed Asbury as an associate superintendent with Dr. Coke; but he declined the appointment, except by the suffrage of his brethren. The first action of the Conference was to elect him and Coke

superintendents, or bishops. Its subsequent action was to perfect its organization in detail, and prepare rules for the government of both preachers and people under the *régime* of the new church. On motion of Mr. Dickens, it was unanimously resolved to take the title of "The Methodist-Episcopal Church of the United States of America."

Twelve preachers were elected and ordained elders; three were elected and ordained deacons. On the second day, Mr. Asbury was ordained a deacon; on the third day, an elder; and, on the fourth, ordained to the office of bishop. These were eventful acts in the history of Methodism. For thirty years thereafter he was to be the controlling mind and the energetic executive of the church. It was a gracious providence that gave the newly formed church an Asbury at this critical period of its history: his qualifications for his new official position had been already partly shown, as Wesley's assistant in the provincial state of the societies. His popularity among his brethren, and their confidence in him, were manifested by their unanimous votes for him for bishop. Besides his natural and gracious endowments for the office, he was acquainted with the condition of almost every society in the church, and knew personally the history and gifts of nearly every preacher of the Conference. He had been practically a superintendent of the American connection for the last five years, and needed now only the authority of official suffrage and consecration.

The Methodists had become a "considerable people" in Baltimore; and the session of this Christmas Conference was, in more than one sense, "a feast of fat things." The preaching was daily attended by large and devout

congregations. The hospitality of the citizens was lavishly bestowed, and the ten days of the Conference were a continuous jubilee.

The members of that Conference were most of them objects of interest and worthy of study, seen either in the light of their past eventful histories, or in their qualifications for doing great things in the future church. Dr. Hamilton, who knew some of them personally, and could delineate their characters with a master's pencil, and who, by many years' experience in the workings of Methodism, could appreciate the doings and the men of that Conference, says, "Leaving out Asbury and his English brethren, — Whatcoat and Vasey, who were yet in the prime of life, — the American preachers had still about them the prestige of a vigorous manhood. Few, if any of them, would now be called old men. Dromgoole, who joined the Conference in 1774, had travelled but ten years, and sat as senior among his brethren. John Cooper and William Glendenning were one year later; and then Francis Poythress and Freeborn Garrettson, who entered the Conference in 1776. After this we see the names of eleven — including John Dickens and Caleb B. Pedicord — who joined in 1777; and, for 1778 and 1779, eight more. These fourteen preachers, with Dr. Coke, Bishop Asbury, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey, — in all eighteen, — constituted properly what might be called the age of the Conference; being men of experience, and well acquainted with the workings of Methodism. A few others had travelled four years; some, three; a considerable number, two years; and others, even not more than ten months.

"Thus a large proportion of the members of that great council were young men, — young, at least, in the

work of the ministry; but many of them doubtless had old heads on young shoulders. With such master spirits as Coke and Asbury, Whatcoat, Dromgoole, Poythress, Garrettson, and Dickens, to direct and influence their deliberations, nothing was likely to be done — was done — but what was best for the whole church. Their work of ten days has been before us for three-fourths of a century, and speaks for itself; will continue to speak in all coming time, as presenting one of the wisest and fairest monuments of human arrangement for the good of the race.

"The secret of their success was their oneness of spirit. Like the disciples in the Jerusalem chamber, 'they were all of one heart and one mind.' Whoever looks at the system of rules or government devised and sent forth by the general Conference of 1784, must concede to it a 'whole-sidedness' and unselfishness, both as it regards the preachers themselves, and the people under their care. Casting aside all precedents as authoritative in church government, and looking to the examples of Christ and his apostles, they went straight on in the work of planning and executing, knowing at the time the obloquy and scorn with which they would be assailed from every quarter; and now that men have grown wiser in spite of themselves, the Methodists can look up in conscious manhood while pointing to the result, and say, 'Behold what hath God wrought!'"

The future progress and character of the church depended very much on the "Rules and Regulations" adopted at this Conference. It was no small matter to organize a church of fifty thousand adherents, scattered over nearly the whole territory of the nation. It was to prepare a discipline that would be neither im-

properly loose nor unduly severe, for both preachers and people; that would be adapted to the new condition of the State, and comprehensive in its policy with the promised greatness of the nation; that would provide for the spiritual, financial, and social wants of the church. In the true spirit of Methodism, this Conference had to be conserving, and to provide for the healthy and vigorous preservation and life of the societies already gathered. It had to adopt a policy thoroughly aggressive and defensive, and to look after every home interest, and to quicken with an active impulsiveness the evangelical spirit of the whole connection. The societies had been, hitherto, a kind of provincial part of the Wesleyan body: they had taken Wesley's large "Minutes" for their discipline, and their leaders had sought chiefly to pilot the American craft in Wesley's wake. Now they were to steer it independently of foreign control. They were to be guided by observations of their own taking, and be obedient to the dictates of their own judgment. Wisdom, experience, and fidelity are important requisites in all legislation for the government of others: how very important it was in a body like this, giving direction to, and furnishing a precedent for, all succeeding ones! The history of the church has proved how these qualities abounded in the members of the general Conference of 1784.

Wesley himself contributed largely in preparing for the action of this Conference. He furnished a liturgy, an abridgment from that of the English Church, entitled "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, with other occasional services." It contained "a form of public prayer; the form and manner of making and ordaining superintendents, elders, and deacons; the

articles of religion; and a collection of psalms and hymns for the Lord's Day." These were all severally adopted by the Conference.

The "Articles of Religion," containing twenty-four sections, were an abridgment, with some change in the phraseology, from the "Thirty-nine Articles" of the Church of England. The seventeenth, usually known as the Calvinistic article, was of course omitted. The Conference showed its loyalty to the Government of the United States, by adding another article, asserting the supremacy of the executive and legislative powers of the General and State Governments, and declaring that "said States ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction." There can be no better proof of the excellence and comprehensiveness of these articles than is found in the fact that they have virtually remained inviolate and unaltered to the present day. Whatever disaffection has arisen in the Methodist church on account of government or policy, there has always been an unvarying unanimity and love for its articles of religion.

The form of public prayer was short-lived. Mr. Wesley's proclivities for the Church induced him to prepare it, and the veneration of the Conference for him disposed them to adopt it. The use of it was attempted for a while in some of the larger congregations; but American Methodism had no sympathy for prayers that were read. They had not so learned, and were disinclined to the yoke. As soon as 1792, its use, and all reference to this part of the liturgical service, disappeared.

The forms of making and ordaining superintendents (bishops), elders, and deacons, as furnished by Wesley, have remained in use, with scarcely a verbal change, to the present time. The "Psalms and Hymns" were soon

left out of the "Discipline," and printed separately. They have passed through several revisions and enlargements. This Conference had much to do in regulating, what may be strictly called the economy of the church. It determined how men were to be elected to the various "orders," and defined their duties and liabilities. It guarded against imposition from false or unworthy ministers. The rules providing for the "allowance," or salary, of ministers and their families were not the least part of its resolves. They indicate a caution, that would have seemed hardly necessary in those times, lest any man should be tempted by "filthy lucre" to engage in the work of the ministry. They tell the maximum of the allowance: they needed not usually to limit the minimum. Each preacher may receive no more than *sixty-four dollars* annually! and the same amount for his wife. Each child under eleven years of age might be allowed about a quarter of this sum! Verily, this might be called a part of the *economy* of Methodism!

The Conference provided for a kind of mutual-benefit "Preacher's Fund," for superannuated preachers and their families; also for "a general fund for carrying on the whole work of God," by annual or quarterly collections "in the principal congregations." It was a domestic-mission arrangement, and one of the first devised in this country for preaching the gospel to new and destitute regions.

Forms and regulations were adopted for the administration of the sacraments, and it was determined who were proper persons to receive them; also how persons should be admitted to the church, and how unworthy members should be excluded; also, to encour-

age spirituality and prevent formality in singing, it was ordered that "every person in the congregation should sing,—not one in ten only." All superfluity of dress was prohibited. The Methodists of those primitive days were resolved on being a plain people. They gave "no tickets to any that wore high heads, enormous bonnets, ruffles, or rings!" It was enacted that members should "not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and they were prohibited marrying "unawakened persons;" and such as did, were to "be expelled the society."

This Conference adopted stringent measures for the "extirpation" of slavery, and published its sentiments respecting the "great evil." It said "We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the inalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in the deepest debasement — in a more abject slavery than is to be found in any part of the world, except America — so many souls that are capable of the image of God. We therefore think it our most bounden duty to take immediately some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us."

The memorable Christmas Conference was closed after ten days of harmonious deliberation, and American Methodism took a systematic, organized form. The preachers separated from Baltimore to their distant fields of service, feeling that they were no more mere "lay preachers," but full ministers of the Lord Jesus; that every official in the church, from the class-leader to the bishop, had received additional functional power by the new organization; and that the societies were no more scattered sheep, at best in extemporized enclos-

ures, but a folded flock, with the full privileges and ordinances provided by the Great Shepherd.

The proceedings of this Conference were as satisfactory to the Methodist people as to the preachers. The independence of the nation was not a greater cause of joy to the American people than the creation of an independent Methodist Church was to the members of the Methodist societies. Jesse Lee says, "The Methodists were pretty generally pleased at our becoming a church, and heartily united together in the plan which the Conference had adopted; and from that time religion greatly revived." William Watters says, "It gave great satisfaction throughout all our societies." Ezekiel Cooper says, "This step met with general approbation, both among the preachers and members."

We do not now propose to attempt any defence of the order and government of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. High Churchmen may prate about the invalidity of its ordinations, and Independents may call its government illiberal or oppressive. To the former we say, that its ordinations are such as the church at Antioch conferred on Barnabas and Saul; and to the latter, that the restraints of its economy are salutary, without being burdensome; and to both we say, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Let us rather look now to find the quality and the measure of the fruit.

CHAPTER X.

CHURCH EXTENSION, — 1785–1812.

"Not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hands."

THERE were three marked characteristics that distinguished American Methodism, for the first quarter of a century after its organization as a church. They were its pioneer movements, or church extension; great demonstrative revivals; and the adaptation of its economy for permanency and efficiency. We will devote a chapter to each of these.

The close of the Conference of 1784 found Methodism in a good state to begin a vigorous aggressive movement. It had struggled through the war, and, in spite of all hindrances, had generally maintained the ground it had before occupied. It had also extended its line of labor further southward, and increased its membership from *three thousand* to *fifteen thousand.* The few societies that had been suspended or destroyed during the war were being successfully resuscitated, and brought into order, and supplied with pastors. An inspiration was imparted to both preachers and people, from the large increase of the membership in the year that followed the war, — greater than any previous

year of Methodist history. Like a large yield of first fruits, it was an earnest of the future harvest.

The spirit of the country was jubilant over the peace that had come, after so many years of anxious conflict; and large expectations were indulged of something great and prosperous in the future history of the young nation. Already the tide of emigration began to move outward to the vast unoccupied regions of the West. This daring, energetic spirit of the civilian would naturally be felt by the itinerants. They would aspire to make the newly organized church rival the enterprise of the people. They sought to make its influence felt, and to establish its institutions, co-extensively with the domain of the nation.

With such aspirations, every Methodist preacher felt, that, now that the really "sacramental" host was organized, disciplined, and equipped, there was nothing to hinder it from achieving great and certain victories.

This hopeful, expectant spirit of the itinerants was heartily reciprocated by the members of the Methodist societies. They rejoiced in the new organization "with exceeding joy." They showed how much they appreciated their new privileges, by the "rush" they made to enjoy the sacraments from the hands of their own ministers. Many of them had never before partaken of the Lord's Supper. Either they had not had opportunity to do so from ministers of other denominations; or, as was often the case, they were disinclined to receive it from the hands of men in whose religious character they had no confidence. When, therefore, the sacramental table was reared in their own religious family, and they were invited to draw near, they hastened to respond to the call with thanksgivings and

great rejoicings. Sacramental seasons became great religious festivals, and were marked with extraordinary displays of the divine power.

The opportunity to receive the sacrament of baptism was also eagerly embraced. Thousands of the members had never been baptized; and nearly all the children of Methodist parents were unbaptized. The parents came to receive the ordinance, and brought their children: scores and hundreds of them at a time were initiated into the benefits of this covenant-making ordinance of the church. The preachers ordained at the Christmas Conference were widely distributed in different parts of the connection; and at quarterly meetings, and other public services, the demand for baptism was so great that the administrator often became weary in its administration. It has been estimated that not less than ten thousand children and adults were baptized by Methodist ministers within two years after the adjournment of the Conference in 1784.

If Methodism is Christianity in earnest, it is also Christianity at work, and taking the form of evangelical aggression. It believes in an experience that is always impelling its subjects "to speak the things they have seen and heard." It holds the doctrine that Christ died for all; it professes to have received a commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Its organization favors diffusion. In its class and prayer meetings, its members are trained to disseminate the truth, by declaring freely the great things the Lord hath done for them. Its exhorters and local preachers are appointed to find out the few or the many who have not regular ministrations of the Word, and to preach to them the message of exhortation.

The itinerancy is a thoroughly pioneer system, that widens and extends its circuit to all that are destitute. It seeks out the people, rather than waits to be called by the people. When the itinerant commits himself to the service, he says submissively to authority, "Here am I: send me." The practical effect of all this belief, experience, and training, was that, if a private member moved his residence into a community where Methodism had not gone before him, he began to speak of the grace that had saved him; and ere long he gathered others to the knowledge of the same grace, with whom he could "take sweet counsel;" and they together formed the nucleus of a class, and a growing church. If an exhorter or local preacher moved into a community without the ministry of the Word, he began to exhort, and teach the "truth as it is in Jesus;" and he soon prepared a regular appointment for an itinerant. The itinerant, reaching out and surveying the waste places, quickly found himself "enlarged to preach the gospel to regions beyond."

Never since the days of Paul and Barnabas have there been found better specimens of energetic and spirited evangelists than American Methodism furnished in the first half-century of its history. There seemed to be an honest rivalry whether the emigrant should be more daring and industrious in seeking a new region to improve his worldly condition, or the itinerant in finding him out, offering him the message of salvation, and throwing around him the constraints and influences of religion.

It was no new spirit breathed into the members of the Christmas Conference, but an old one, quickened, and made systematically effective, that developed itself from

that body. It was the vigor of youth, increased and directed by a nearer approach to manhood.

The work of church extension, properly of missionary efforts, was inaugurated at this Conference by sending Garrettson and Cromwell to Nova Scotia. Methodism for a few years had had a limited and struggling existence among the colonists composing the Eastern British Provinces. It had originated in Nova Scotia, about four years before, in the labors of William Black: since that time he had succeeded in raising a few societies, and they had become too numerous for him to supervise alone. He believed that there was a good promise and a demand for itinerants in the colony; and he came to Baltimore to meet Dr. Coke, and press on him the importance of sending missionaries to the promising field.

How strange and unforeseen, but gracious, are the workings of Providence! The interest awakened in the mind of Dr. Coke for Nova Scotia resulted in sending Garrettson and Cromwell as desired; but it also moved him to other efforts in behalf of those provinces, that resulted in far greater things for other regions. On his return to England, the following year, he devoted himself to raise money, and to get other men who would go with him to Nova Scotia. On their way thither a storm drove them from their course to an island of the West Indies, and there the doctor and his missionaries commenced a work that has resulted in the great Wesleyan missions of the West Indies.

Garrettson and Cromwell landed at Halifax, and began their missionary labors. We need not follow them in the details. They found there John Mann, — a convert of Boardman in New York, ten years before, and who had supplied the John-street Church during the Revolution-

ary War, while the English held the city. He heartily joined with them, and made a third itinerant. They found also some Methodist refugees from the States, who, in loyalty to the king, had fled thither, and who formed a company with which to commence the organization of Methodism in the colony.

The toils and sufferings of the missionaries were very great, but they had great success in their mission. They also extended their field to the island of Newfoundland and to New Brunswick. Garrettson labored in these provinces for two years. Wesley, at his instance, sent other missionaries; and, when Garrettson returned to the States, there were in Nova Scotia over seven hundred members. The results of this missionary movement of the Conference of 1784 cannot be wholly told in figures; yet Methodism has now in Eastern British America a separate Wesleyan Conference, with over an hundred preachers, thousands of members, with chapels and all the appliances of religious prosperity.

Methodism has been introduced into many places in this country by agencies unanticipated, and often very humble and apparently uninfluential. This has not, however, been the usual way. Generally it has been from a purpose seriously and deliberately formed, and the work has commenced with a design as definite and fixed as a leader of an army would have in attempting to take a city. Rarely, if ever, has the purpose failed: if it seemed to fail for a season, the invincible itinerant never gave it up. Trusting in the promise, "Lo! I am with you alway," he persisted: he followed out his mission "on that line" until the desire of his heart was accomplished.

We have an instance of this planning for church ex-

tension, and its success, in the movement of Asbury to plant Methodism in Charleston, S.C., soon after the adjournment of the Christmas Conference. Hitherto it had been a stranger in that city. Pillmore had visited Charleston in 1773, but he formed no society. Charleston was the leading city of the South, and Asbury resolved to establish there a church.

After the close of the Conference in North Carolina, with Jesse Lee as his companion, and Henry Willis as a forerunner, to give out his appointments and prepare the way, Asbury moved on Charleston. A providential letter of introduction to a merchant of the city provided for him a place of entertainment. His host and family were soon converted. By a special favor, an unoccupied Baptist church was obtained for preaching, and Lee opened the services with a congregation of *twenty*. Every day, for a week, one of the itinerant company preached; and the congregation increased. A society was formed of a few members, and Willis left in charge. The next year Asbury visited the city again: he says, "The congregations are large, and the little flock are encouraged to undertake the building of a house of worship." The next year, the house was finished, and was capable of seating fifteen hundred people. Dr. Coke dedicated it. "It gave to Methodism an established and permanent character. It was a public declaration that it had driven down its stake, and intended to hold on."

The introduction of Methodism into Charleston by Asbury naturally leads us to refer to his influence in imparting an evangelical spirit to Methodism everywhere. He affected all its interests and movements, and for more than a quarter of a century was its con-

trolling mind. It may be doubted whether Wesley directed Methodism in England more energetically than Asbury did in America. It was not from his office so much as the manner in which he magnified his office by the true spirit and work of a bishop; by his zeal, privations, toils, and comprehensive plans, to give vigor and extension to the church. He gave no orders from behind his troops, but in the van. If he appointed a preacher to the wild regions of Kentucky or Tennessee, or to the swamps of North Carolina, or to the borders of Canada, or to the province of Maine, that preacher expected to be visited by him in his new appointment the coming year. He asked no man to dare, where he was himself afraid or unwilling to go. He practised, while he preached, a pioneer evangelism. The effect of being led by such a man could only be to train the whole body of itinerants to a heroic and resolute propagandism. To Asbury, more than to any other man, was Methodism indebted for its church extension at that period. But let us see it further developed.

Asbury went from Charleston, and met the first Conference in North Carolina. Here he sent a resolute and able missionary, Beverly Allen, and designated his appointment, "to Georgia." It is very significant, for it literally meant that his circuit comprehended the whole State. It was new ground, and he had to cultivate it where he could. The appointee was not dismayed by the newness or extensiveness of his field. He returned to the next Conference with the report of seventy-eight members gathered into society. Two men were then appointed to the same field, and they reported at the ensuing Conference *four hundred and fifty* members. Thenceforth Methodism "marched on," and very soon the single circuit

was subdivided into many. Thousands were enrolled in the church; and Methodism became "a power" in Georgia, — the result of its spirit of church extension.

About the same time that Methodism moved southward to Charleston and Georgia, it commenced its march westward, — first into the valley of the Holston, beyond the Alleghanies; and then onward into Kentucky and Tennessee. Emigrants from Virginia and North Carolina had moved into these new wild regions. They were the hunting grounds of the Indian; and adventurous, daring men were settling in the rich valleys. The pioneers were compelled to dwell for safety in strongly defended forts or "stations." Among these emigrants, there was occasionally a Methodist local preacher, of primitive, hardy mould, but godly and gifted, to preach the Word to such a wild and venturous community. They succeeded in forming small societies in the various localities where they dwelt. As early as 1784, the itinerants crossed the mountains, and gathered into the church quite a number, along the Holston and French Broad Rivers. In 1786, James Haw and Benjamin Ogden were commissioned for the wide circuit of "Kentucky." It was a perilous undertaking, but not too hazardous for them to dare. The Indians were often on their track, and their privations and hardships kept their lives in constant peril; but they labored and sang, —

> "The love of Christ doth me constrain
> To seek the wandering souls of men."

Their labor was not in vain. The next year Dr. Coke, referring to a letter received from Haw, says, "One of our elders who last year was sent with a preacher to Kentucky, on the banks of the Ohio, wrote

to me a most enlivening account of his district, and earnestly implored some further assistance. 'But observe,' added he, 'no man must be appointed to this country that is afraid to die.'" The first year there were ninety members reported in these "forts," and two more itinerants were sent for re-enforcements. The following year, there were five hundred members. The success of Methodism in Kentucky was great and rapid; and in 1792, when it was admitted a State in the Union, it had a Conference with twelve preachers and twenty-five hundred members, extending over nearly every portion of the State. The itinerants had entered in time to determine and give direction to the future religious character of the people.

About the same time, and in the same manner, and with similar results, Methodism took possession of Tennessee. Some of its itinerants were the most courageous, devoted, and able men that have graced the roll of honor in the early history of the Methodist ministry. The records of their deeds, in written words, were few; but the monuments of their zeal and success were reared in the thriving societies they formed, and are more enduring and honorable than pen and ink can make them.

The time soon came for Methodism to branch out northward. It is a strange fact, for which we can hardly account, that, after its initiation into New-York City, its diffusion for more than twenty years was almost exclusively toward the south. It had formed one or two small societies in Westchester, or on Long Island, or Staten Island. Beyond these, excepting a little band composed of Embury, Ashton, and a few Irish emigrants who had sequestered themselves in Washington County, Methodism was unknown north of New York to the Canada

line. It was time to branch out in that direction. The enterprise was deliberately planned, maturely considered, and resolutely commenced.

At the Conference in New York in 1788, Bishop Asbury requested Mr. Garrettson to take charge of nine young, enterprising itinerants; and form them on circuits, from New-York City to Lake Champlain. It was a grand undertaking, and Garrettson was the right man to lead it. But its greatness gave him much anxiety. "He was unacquainted with the country, and an entire stranger to its inhabitants." It affected his dreams. He says, "It seemed as if the whole country up the North River, as far as Lake Champlain, east and west, was open to my view." After the close of the Conference he gave his young men instructions where to begin, and how to form their circuits. He would go before them to the extreme parts of the field, and, on his return, visit them and hold their quarterly meetings. This looks to us like anticipating results; but it was the way that Methodist ministers in those days exhibited their confidence in their expected success. Six circuits were formed from New Rochelle to Lake Champlain; and Garrettson led the way up the North River. "On his return he found that his itinerants were almost everywhere prevailing over opposition, and forming prosperous societies."

This sudden descent of so many preachers was the cause of considerable speculation and excitement. They passed from place to place with great rapidity, and seemed to be everywhere. Some said, "They must have come from the clouds;" others, that "the king of England had sent them to disaffect the people, and bring on another war;" and still others, that "they were the false prophets spoken of in Scripture, who should come

in the last days, and, if possible, deceive the very elect." Ministers of the different denominations became alarmed, and "some of them openly opposed, declaring publicly that the doctrines were false." But, continues Garrettson, "The power of the Lord attended the Word, and a great reformation was seen among the people." Garrettson continued on this district for three years. Meanwhile he had extended its bounds into Vermont on the east, and westward to Utica, then quite a new and unsettled country. It had increased in three years to twelve circuits, and over three thousand members, and embraced nearly all the territory now included in the New York and Troy Conferences. In 1789, one of Garrettson's preachers on the Newburgh Circuit struck out south-westerly into the Wyoming Valley. Three years before this, a local preacher in the valley had begun to exhort his neighbors, and gathered several of them into classes. The beautiful Wyoming was soon added to the list of regular appointments, and thenceforth became a stronghold of Methodism. "Church extension" was the inspiring watchword of every Methodist minister of those days.

Strangest of all, Methodism had not yet formally and efficiently entered New England. For nearly a quarter of a century after it was planted in America, New England — the land where Whitefield had met with such success and opposition, and had died; a land where there were churches organized and supported by law; where there were schools and Bibles and a stated ministry; the land of "steady habits," and of stern, dogmatic Christianity — had been neglected by Methodism. The field was vastly different from any other that it had occupied. Why had it been passed by? Did it not

need the living, spiritual, experimental fire of Methodism; or was it so impregnable in its religious prejudices, and so exclusive in the supremacy of its Calvinism, that Methodism and Arminianism could find no entrance or place? Can an *earnest* religion do no good? Was the ground so hard, or the land so rocky, that the Methodist plough could not subsoil it? We shall see.

The work of a Methodist pioneer in New England was very different from what he was called to do in introducing his mission into other communities of the land. He preached the same truths, and the importance that men should hear and obey them, that he did in other regions; but he found a people generally very differently disposed to receive them, — a people possessed with the belief that they were either already surely saved by a divine purpose, irrespective of themselves; or hopelessly lost despite of themselves. The doctrine of a universal atonement, by which they might all be saved, was rank heresy. He found a people with a settled pastorate, to which they looked as certain authority and safe counsel in all religious matters; and any itinerant teacher was at best an intruder, perhaps a false prophet, or, still worse, a vagrant. The itinerants were to be treated with the coldest reception, or formal suspicion and neglect. The congregations, that curiosity assembled to hear them, were more ready to dispute on the "five points" of Calvinism than listen with deep personal concern to the great message of a free salvation to all who would repent and believe in Christ. Their hearers were more solicitous to know if the preacher understood Latin and Greek than whether his teaching agreed with the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount, or with the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Instead of finding a

people, like the Bereans, candidly inquiring from the Scriptures whether the word they heard was true, the itinerants found them mail-clad with prejudice and conceit, not unfrequently with bigotry, and disposed to respond, "These are Galileans: can they teach us?" Nevertheless Methodism must enter New England, and the time had come to attempt it. What was its success?

At the Conference in New York, in May, 1789, Bishop Asbury read out an appointment, "Stamford, Jesse Lee." What did it mean? Four years before this, Lee had met a gentleman from Boston, in Charleston, S.C., who gave him an account of the religious state of New England. His mind became so much interested in this account, and with a desire to plant Methodism there, that he at once formed the purpose of attempting it. He immediately revealed his desire to Bishop Asbury; but the bishop regarded his purpose as visionary and impracticable. Still Lee held fast to it; and he had now come from the South to New York, to attempt its accomplishment.

But what is the meaning as the Bishop announces "Stamford, Jesse Lee?" Stamford was in Connecticut; but there was no Methodist church there, not a single member, — no one to whom he was known, or who had any interest in his coming. Stamford, in Methodism, was a myth. It was the first town in Connecticut over the New-York border, and really meant that the appointment was for all New England, where Methodism had not a single member; and what had been heard of it, had made the name synonymous with fanaticism and disorder. To the appointee the whole territory was new; and, if he should enter any door, it would be after he

had pressed it open notwithstanding the prejudices and opposition that held it closed. "By faith he was to sojourn in a land of promise, as in a strange country." To ask as he did for such an appointment, and to receive it as he did with joy and hope, was true heroism.

Lee's first year was spent almost entirely in Connecticut. He was often refused the common hospitalities of friendship; often repulsed in his overtures to preach to the people. He had not, as the itinerant pioneers of the West, to ford rivers, swimming his horse; he had not, as they, to sleep in rude log-cabins or in the wilderness; he had no fear of losing his way by blazed paths, and of sinking in the mire of Southern swamps. But he had to endure what, to a sensitive and noble mind, was worse,— to be treated as a vagabond, suspected, traduced, and despised. Yet he held on his way; and, whenever he could, in the open air or in some place of shelter, he preached to the people "a free, a present, and a full salvation."

The result of his first year was scarcely more than "staking out" the field, for his "helpers" to cultivate the ensuing year. Then he passed on to Eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island, repeating the labors of the preceding year, with kindred obstacles. In Boston, finding no house available in which he could preach, he took his place on a table under a venerable elm on the Common, and preached the Word of life to three thousand people,— the Bostonians, with the curiosity of an old Athenian, inquiring, "Who is he? Whence has he come? By what authority doeth he this?" But no one opened a door to receive him, or to bid him "God speed." He passed on to Lynn, and formed the first society and built the first Methodist church east of the Connecticut River.

In this way he persisted in his work, and progressed. New laborers were soon sent to him from other parts, or raised up, "to the manor born," to assist him. Diligently extending and organizing his labors, he saw at the end of ten years all New England embraced in a permanent and consistent system of itinerancy, and Methodism permeating every city and town of importance in the Puritan States.

We can now answer the question, What came of that spirit of church extension that moved Jesse and his co-laborers to establish Methodism in New England? More than seventy-five years have passed, and the nominal "Stamford" has one of the finest churches and Methodist societies in the land. New England, to which Lee alone was sent, without a chapel or church-member, has now more than *one hundred thousand members*, and over *seven hundred ministers and churches*. The net he first cast on that side of the ship has enclosed this marvellous draught.

Probably the success of Methodism in the different sections of the country is attributable to the wisdom of Asbury in selecting the right men for the places to which they were assigned. All of them had some qualities in common; they were "good men and full of the Holy Ghost;" they were courageous and industrious men: a coward or a drone found no place among them. But the character of New-England society required gifts very different from those demanded for the wild regions of Kentucky; and Lee had these special endowments. In common with all itinerants, it is likely that he wore a straight coat, and a white cravat without a collar; that his face was smoothly shaven, and that his hat had an ample brim; that he usually travelled on horseback,

with saddlebags, carrying all his earthly goods, "real, personal, and mixed." His library, itinerant, like himself, embraced a Bible, Methodist Hymn-book, and "Discipline;" for all these were the style and accoutrements of a Methodist preacher. In some of these particulars he probably differed from the manner of many of his successors: we do not attach much importance to most of them. But, in addition, he had a noble bodily presence, and great suavity in his address. He possessed the gift of *eloquence.* Probably no voice had been heard in New England, since the days of Whitefield, with the power of his to affect and persuade an audience. He had, too, great *ready wit,*— a gift that was often brought into requisition, to answer the cavilling, captious disposition of his hearers. To these should be added wonderful *executive talent,*— a power to organize and bring into co-operation his converts, or those who labored with him.

The crowning endowment of Lee, for his mission among the descendants of the Puritans, was an abiding conviction that he was directed to it by God, and that he could not, must not, fail. He did not expect it to be a holiday recreation: he knew that he would meet with difficulties and discouragements. He had faith in the power of the gospel and in the appointment of God; and he knew that he would be able to succeed notwithstanding opposition, and that he should see the fulfilment of his desire.

The missionary spirit was not exhausted, and the mission field northward was not wholly compassed, when Garrettson organized his young men, on a district north of New York. There was a needy, if not a promising, region beyond. The Canadas, though most of them

were wild wilderness, with a rude and scattered population, must be possessed by Methodism. In 1790, *William Losee*, a one-armed, but whole souled-pioneer preacher, crossed the St. Lawrence on a prospecting tour into these provinces. He was the first regular itinerant to enter the Canadas. Methodism, however, had preceded him. A few local preachers in different places had already begun to preach to their neighbors, and had formed a few small classes. These welcomed him with open arms. The next year he was duly appointed by the New-York Conference to Kingston, Upper Canada. He was a fiery, live man, and he preached around in different towns, and very soon formed a number of societies. The wilderness and solitary place began to bud and blossom as the rose. The next year, he returned *one hundred and sixty-five* members, and had built two chapels. Methodism never goes backward. Thenceforth it made continual progress in the Canadas. In twenty years it numbered twenty itinerants and three thousand members. It is now much the largest denomination of those provinces.

In our brief survey of the great work of church extension that distinguished this period of Methodism, we have confined our attention to those large districts, or regions of country, embracing whole States or Territories, and which had hitherto been untrodden by the itinerants, — districts, that were to form great centres for the wide diffusion of Methodism; regions, that, because of their remoteness from societies already organized, required a peculiar courage, independence, and enterprise to occupy them, and showing the extent of the pioneer spirit of the itinerancy. It would be impossible to narrate the many ways in which its diffusive

spirit developed itself on a smaller scale: how it laid hold of communities or towns adjacent to those already embraced in Methodistic supervision. Every Methodist preacher was an extensionist; to him the field was the world; his "parish lines" were an indefinite and widening boundary. He was ever saying, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of their habitations: spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." Beginning with a new "week-day" appointment, he expected to have it, in a short time, a good sabbath-day congregation and society. His circuit must soon be made so large as to require division. In turn, the district becomes so great that it, too, must be divided. The itinerancy was a vigorous scheme of church extension. "Springs of water break forth in the desert, and the solitary place became a fruitful field."

Only one portion of the populated domain of the United States remained to be entered by Methodism. In 1798, the region of the West lying north of the Ohio River, known as the North-west Territory, had been untraversed by the itinerants. Until four years before this time, every part of it had been harassed by warring Indian tribes, and but few white settlers had dared to locate in it. The subjugation of the Indians opened the territory, and emigration turned to it rapidly. Caravans of hardy pioneers found it the most attractive portion of the West.

Settlements had hardly begun, before the Methodist minister was found in the rude cabin of the settler, calling him to the cross, and laboring to permeate the domestic, social, and civil life of the rapidly increasing population of the territory with the religion of Jesus.

At that time, two itinerants were appointed to Ohio: it was a wide field. It was the beginning, but only the beginning, of aggressive Methodism in the great "North-western Territory." No part of the United States found a more fruitful soil; none yielded a greater harvest.

In about twelve years after that time, Ohio and Indiana and a part of Illinois and Michigan — States, or Territories, carved out of the North-western — were covered over with a network of circuits and districts, with a membership of not less than *six thousand*, and a quarter of a hundred of preachers, going to and fro, preaching the everlasting gospel to the people. Since then, the yield has been thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold.

Before we close this chapter on Methodistic church extension for a quarter of a century, it will afford us satisfaction to take a bird's-eye view of the results.

When the Christmas Conference met in Baltimore, in 1784, the domain of American Methodism was limited to a narrow belt along the sea-coast, with New-York City as its northern boundary, and North Carolina as its southern, and reaching inland an average of an hundred miles. In 1810, it had been well established in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, covered all the New-England States, and reached southward nearly to the Gulf of Mexico, embracing South Carolina and Georgia. It had spread out through the inhabited portions of Upper and Lower Canada, and formed a northern line along the great lakes, striking across to the Mississippi, and following the father of waters for a western limit far down toward its mouth. It drew out its circuits and districts over every State and populated Territory of the Union, as definitely as the geographer maps out counties and States. Its area had increased not less than seven-fold.

In 1785, American Methodism reported a membership of *fifteen thousand.* It had *eighty-three* preachers, distributed on *forty-six* circuits. Probably there were *one hundred* chapels. In 1810, its membership had increased to *one hundred and seventy-five thousand,* or nearly *twelve*-fold. It had over *four hundred* circuits, supplied by *six hundred and thirty-six* preachers, with nearly *five hundred* chapels. It had not less than a million of persons, young and old, attendant on its ministry. Such a numerical ratio of increase cannot probably be found in the annals of history.

But this progress in church extension is not to be measured only by area and figures. Methodism had meanwhile advanced in moral influence, and in its position in the nation. It had become a "power in the land,"—respected and trusted. It had transformed communities by its saving presence; and, "instead of the thorn, had come up the fir-tree, and, instead of the brier, had come up the myrtle tree, to be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that should not be cut off."

CHAPTER XI.

REVIVALS, — 1785-1812.

"The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

A REVIVAL is a household word, — a term, when applied to religion, that is well understood. It is understood to mean a time of awakening attention to religious things, — a season of special religious interest.

Methodists, with this definition, have always been advocates of revivals. Every period of Methodism has been signalized by their influence, affecting its character and its extent. Its entire history might be called *one continuous revival.* It originated in one. The scenes at Bristol and Kingswood; the multitudes gathering at Moorfields to hear Wesley and Whitefield; the crowds that pressed everywhere in England to listen to the lay preachers; the excited companies that urge their way into the rigging-loft in New York, many of them inquiring "what they must do to be saved,"— were all the legitimate exhibitions of a revival. Thousands of scenes of similar interest have been transpiring all along the line of Methodist history. Scarcely a society has been formed but it grew out of a revival. Methodist preachers have labored to produce them, Methodist

members have prayed to see them; and both preachers and people have rejoiced when they have transpired. The increase and the prosperity of Methodism have been the greatest when revivals have been most frequent and powerful. The spread and growth of the denomination were not the products of only a well-arranged and systematic organization, and the preaching of orthodox doctrines. These alone would have been no more than a well-constructed machine, without a power to move it,—a body without the soul. Methodism would still have lacked the vital force to give it energy. That energy came from "the unction of the Holy One,"—from the Spirit of God, quickening and impelling the body, and producing what we call revivals.

It must not, however, be inferred that Methodism is spasmodic, because it believes in the goodness of revivals; or that its members believe in an intermitting and uneven religious life. Far from it. Methodists have no faith in "barren seasons." Believing that Christians should have a measure of the Spirit at all times, they insist that the fruit of it shall be continually seen in the life. Nevertheless, they know that there are times when God seems to dispense his Spirit, to quicken and influence the hearts of men, more than at others; when sinners are more affected by the truth than at others; and that these gracious times are greatly dependent on the faithfulness of Christians for the degree in which they are given. Knowing these things, Methodists have ever regarded these extraordinary dispensations of the spirit as real harvest-seasons of grace. With the philosophy of revivals they have less concern than with the fact. This they accept, and rejoice when God gives a revival.

The chief justification of revivals by Methodists, aside from the good fruits produced, is the precedent they find in the most interesting portions of the history of the primitive Church. They find in the narration of the scenes and experiences of the Day of Pentecost, and of the days following, a description of a real and grand revival, — one that should be taken as a true type of what a revival should be. They find that then the Holy Ghost was present to enlighten and sanctify the disciples; to awaken sinners, and to lead them to cry out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" and to add "to the church such as should be saved."

It was natural that the preachers who went forth from the Christmas Conference should be solicitous that the responsible work of church organization which they had undertaken should be approved of God. They were not indifferent to its approval by the people, but they were more anxious for the divine indorsement. In what way could this indorsement have been given more expressively and significantly than that "souls were saved"?

This indorsement they had. The "signs following" were unequivocal and extraordinary. Revival followed revival in every place whither the itinerants went. In the older organized societies and in the newly formed ones, in the town and in the country, with the pioneer in the wilderness and with the preacher in the city chapel, — the "power of the Lord" was present, and converts were greatly multiplied.

Though revivals have been a phase of Methodism from its beginning, there has been no period of its history when they were more general, or when they took a more demonstrative form, than for twenty-five years

after the organization of the church. There may have been the same gracious design in the Head of the church, in giving this demonstrative character to them, that he had in giving similar signs and wonders at the origin of the Christian Church. They doubtless had an influence on the ministers themselves. Though regarded and treated, by those without, as ignorant men, — "Galileans," —the itinerants would be assured, and able to withstand all contempt and scorn, when they saw on every hand, and were able to show, that God was with them. It would kindle their zeal, and encourage them in directness of preaching, when they saw that they were so well compensated by quick and abundant fruit. On the people, too, the influence of such demonstrative results was beneficial. First, it gave a notoriety to the services, that drew the people together better than any other kind of advertisement. But next, and what was better, it awakened a state of mind, in those who came, that could not repel anxious and serious religious reflection. This might be resolutely resisted, and some, as of old, would be disposed to scandalize what they saw and heard; but many who "came to mock would remain to pray."

The emotional or passional part of our nature has usually been prominently, perhaps some would say predominently, seen in the phenomena of revivals. In this respect, those that have transpired in connection with Methodism have not been exceptions. The fears of awakened sinners have been manifested by sighs and groans, or some other expressions of alarm. The joys of the converted, or the "witnessing assurance" of the believer, have been attested by songs of praise or by shouts of thanksgiving. Ordinarily, these exhibi-

tions of emotion or passion were in forms of utterance that created no wonder or amazement in the observer. They were confined to well-understood laws of our nature, and were recognized as the legitimate evidences of feelings affected by the Spirit of God. These were the common signs that attended revivals.

But other signs, more extraordinary and demonstrative, have sometimes been exhibited in revivals of religion; not miraculous, but marvellous, and setting at defiance all attempts to account for them by any of the common laws of human experience. During the period of which we write, there were many of these marvellous scenes, — probably more than at any other time in Methodist history.

These exhibitions of physical effects on their subjects have been the theme of speculation or criticism or wonder to all who have witnessed them. Their mystery has never been satisfactorily solved by any reference to known physiological laws.

It is impossible to describe all the varieties of phenomena that characterized these extraordinary cases. In some instances, men who had great physical strength, and were in usual health, would fall suddenly down, as men slain in battle, and not unfrequently when they were hostile to all such demonstrations, and while they were attempting to escape from the influences that produced them. When thus suddenly arrested and prostrated, they would cry out in great agony, and pray for hours for mercy and for the pardon of their sins. And then they would "come out" of this state of horror and helplessness into one of ecstasy and rejoicing, praising God for forgiveness, and telling "to those around what a dear Saviour they had found." Very often, these

men had hitherto been vile, swearers, intemperate, and haters of God and religion; and thenceforth they became praying, godly men, and lived thus for years, until their death. In other cases, the subjects were devoted and sincere Christians, whose lives had been beyond reproach. They would fall prostrate and helpless, not in any apparent suffering, but powerless, and, when delivered from it, would praise the Lord in great raptures. Sometimes the minister himself — though usually distinguished for his self-control — would become unable to speak, and lie in apparent unconsciousness, and, when recovered, would preach with extraordinary power and effect.

The subjects of these remarkable manifestations were as various as the manner of their exhibitions. They were as often the physically strong as the weak, the young as the old. They were limited to neither sex. They were as often those who despised and decried such phenomena as the effect of mental weakness or delusion, as those who held them to be of God and from gracious influences. They were not confined to one part of the country, nor to the ministrations of a particular preacher. They affected the educated as well as the unlearned. Sometimes a single individual would be prostrated; at others hundreds would be simultaneously and strangely affected.

The "diversity of operations" was wonderful. In some, the phenomena was helplessness; in others, it was unusual strength. Some were affected with temporary dumbness, others gave utterance to songs and shouts; some indicated a condition of despair and fear, others showed a transparent ecstasy and joy; and, what was not the least wonderful, rarely, if ever, with all the

high tension and excitement of feeling exhibited, was there one physically injured. The moral effect on the subjects was generally good, and the result was the advancement of true religion in the community. If exceptions have happened, and the moral effect has been evil, they have been when some one, like Simon Magus, has thought by imitation or extravagance to gain influence among the ignorant or the confiding.

Many diversities of opinion have been held respecting the causes and the nature of these religious demonstrations. Only a few have dared to hint that they were the work of imposition. Many have said that they were the result of "mental weakness or delusion." Many have frankly confessed that they were "beyond their comprehension." A few would-be philosophers have referred them all to some physiological or psychological laws, not now fully understood, but to be discovered hereafter, of human production, and in no way produced by the Divine Spirit. With this tame, timid, and sceptical attempt to account for them, we have no sympathy.

The facts connected with these religious phenomena are too numerous, plain, and palpable to allow a question or a doubt that they were in some way related to the operations of God's Spirit. One fact is itself sufficient to establish our position. It is, that the subjects of these phenomena were almost always affected in them by a great moral change,—a change that nothing but the Spirit of God could accomplish. The Spirit wrought indirectly on the physical nature by its influence on the mind. That some who were "struck down" did not experience this great change, is no evidence that God did not arrest them, any more than that some

men who are deeply awakened by the Spirit, and are not converted, is proof that they were not awakened. Saul was stricken to the earth by the power of God, but he tells us the secret of his after conversion, when he says he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." This "obedience" was the secret of his change. Had he been disobedient, it could not have affected or prevented his falling to the earth.

There is no need to pass beyond the Scripture record, to find examples of men physically affected by the motions of the Spirit of God in them. On the day of Pentecost, the wondering, cavilling company that assembled to witness the strange psychological demonstrations of the disciples said, "These men are filled with new wine." — "We can account for all this by a psychological cause." But what does Peter say? Referring to the strange signs that were seen, he bluntly tells them, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose. . But this is that spoken of by the prophet Joel," "when the Spirit should be poured from on high." Is it too much to suppose that this revival of Pentecost was a strongly marked precedent for any and for all revivals? When the first revival among the Gentiles took place, in the house of Cornelius, "and the Holy Ghost," as Peter said, "fell on them *as* on us at the beginning," is it too much to suppose that there were strong physical demonstrative evidence of its presence? Our philosophy and faith both teach us to acknowledge the divine hand, when plainly seen, whether shown in the whirlwind or in the still small voice; whether it makes men cry out in agony because of their sins, and in spite of themselves, or when it impels them to shout the joys of pardon with rapture irrepressible. Since Method-

ism, in its earlier periods at least, was an intenser form of religious experience than most of what was then professed to be religion, we ought to expect it to be shown by more intense and positive exhibitions and signs.

Revivals, throughout the whole extent of Methodism, became the rule. If there were none in any particular regions, they were the exceptions. They seemed to be to the church like "the early and latter rain" to the harvest. They gave spiritual tone and direction, as well as increase, to the societies. The preachers went out from the Christmas Conference, and wrought for them, and with success. The scanty records of those days give us but little more than the number of converts; but there are traditions that tell us that the work was wide-spread and powerful. The few instances that we give more in detail are only given as examples how these jubilant seasons generally absorbed the minds of the community they affected, and the manner in which they progressed.

Jesse Lee, who is properly called the earliest historian of Methodism, gives us an account of a great revival in Virginia, in 1787. In a preceding chapter we have spoken of one that transpired in that State, about ten years before; but he says, "This was attended with more of the divine presence than any other that had been known." It began in the town of Petersburg, and extended over a large portion of the State. "The most remarkable work was in Brunswick and Sussex Circuits. The meetings would sometimes continue five and six hours together, and sometimes all night. At one quarterly meeting, the power of God was among

the people in an extraordinary manner. Some hundreds were awakened, and it was supposed above one hundred souls were converted at that meeting."

He describes another meeting: "By the time the preachers came within half a mile of the chapel, they heard the people shouting, and praising God. When they came up, they found numbers weeping, both in the chapel and in the open air. Some were on the ground crying for mercy, and others in ecstasies of joy. Some were lying and struggling as if they were in the agonies of death; others lay as if they were dead. Hundreds of the believers were so overcome with the power of God that they fell down, and lay helpless on the floor or on the ground; and some of them continued in that helpless condition for a considerable time, and were happy in God beyond description. When they came to themselves, it was generally with loud praises to God, and with tears and expressions enough to melt the hardest heart. The oldest saints had never before seen such a time of love, and such displays of the power of God.

"The next day many scores of both white and black people fell to the earth, and some lay in the deepest distress until morning. Many of the wealthy people, both men and women, were seen lying in the dust, sweating, and rolling on the ground in their fine broadcloths and silks, crying for mercy. But many of these, as the night drew on, were filled with the peace and love of God, and, rising up, would clap their hands and praise God aloud. It was then as pleasing as it had before been awful to behold them.

"Many of these people, who were happily converted, had left their houses, and come to the meeting, with great

opposition to the work of God; but were struck down in an unexpected manner, and converted in a few hours. So mightily did the Lord work that a great change was wrought in a little time."

He says of another meeting, that "the Lord wrought wonders among them on that day. As many as fifty persons professed to get converted before the meeting closed."

He gives similar accounts of meetings in other places, and says that during that summer over four thousand souls were converted on Brunswick, Sussex, and Amelia Circuits. In many other circuits the revival prevailed extensively, "and hundreds were brought to God in the course of the year." The work was not confined to meetings for preaching; but, in prayer-meetings and class-meetings, — some of which "would continue all night without intermission," — and where "men were at work in their cornfields," the same intense interest would be shown, and "many were converted."

This great year of revival in Virginia "established a precedent;" and, in many subsequent years, similar revivals, more or less extensive, prevailed in various parts of that State. Methodism soon became the dominant religious influence among the people.

There were great revivals all over Maryland. The Eastern and Western Shores were in a blaze. The city of Baltimore was the scene of great interest. At Annapolis, Bishop Coke was startled by the excitement. "After my last prayer," he says, "the congregation began to pray and praise aloud in a most astonishing manner. At first I felt some reluctance to enter into the business; but soon the tears began to flow, and I have seldom found a more comforting or strengthening time. What

shall we say? Souls are awakened and converted by multitudes; and the work is surely genuine, if there be a genuine work of God upon earth. Whether there be wild fire in it or not, I do most ardently wish that there was such a work at this time in England."

Bishop Asbury describes what he saw in Baltimore in 1788, when preaching on the sabbath. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord came among the people, and sinners cried aloud for mercy. Perhaps not less than twenty souls found the Lord, from that time until Tuesday following." Another says, "The work thus begun went on most rapidly; and, in a short time, there was such a noise among the people that many, even of the Christians, looked on with astonishment, having never seen things 'on this wise;' while others, as if frightened at what they saw and heard, fled precipitately from the house, — some making their escape through the windows. The strange scene soon drew multitudes to the church. In a short time, some of those who were crying for mercy fell helpless on the floor, or into the arms of their friends. But this scene soon changed. 'Their mourning was turned into joy;' and they arose, and with joyful lips proclaimed the goodness of God to their souls." This revival added three hundred living, spiritual members to the church in Baltimore. It continued through the following year with greater demonstrativeness and extent, and henceforth Baltimore became familiar with revivals.

The introduction of Methodism north of New-York City to Canada, and even into Canada itself, was with similar "signs and wonders." Garrettson and his young men created such an excitement by the wonderful phenomena that attended their labors, particularly by the

great numbers that were everywhere converted, that for a few years it might properly be called an incessant revival, extending eastward into Vermont, and westward into the Otsego country, and along the St. Lawrence.

In 1787, 1788, and 1789, the flame spread all over Kentucky and Cumberland. Haw, one of the itinerants in that large field, wrote to Asbury: "Good news from Zion; the work of God is going on rapidly in this new world; a glorious victory the Son of God has gained, and he is going on conquering and to conquer. Heaven rejoices daily over sinners that repent." After giving detailed accounts of the work in several places of the great circuits of that vast territory, he adds: "The work is still going on rapidly. Indeed, the wilderness and solitary places are glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose, and, I trust, will soon become beautiful as Tirza, and comely as Jerusalem. What shall I more say? Time would fail to tell you all the Lord's doings among us. It is marvellous in our eyes."

When Methodism entered New England, in 1790, it found a *fallow ground*,— a very different religious state, for spiritual culture, from all other parts of the country. The "great awakening," in the time of Edwards and Davenport, had been followed by a reaction that left most of the ministers opponents of revivals, and most of the people in sympathy with the minds of their ministers. What was worse, though some *form* remained, many were disbelievers in the "*power* of godliness." Some had become initiated in the Socinian and Pelagian heresies, and were fast hastening to ripened Sadduceeism, — a class of seemingly hopeless "way-side" hearers. All New England was an unpropitious field for revivals.

Yet it proved susceptible of cultivation. Lee and Cooper and Roberts extended the line of their labors through the Puritan States, breaking up the hard earth, and sowing plentifully the "seed of the kingdom;" and it did not return void. In a few years, revivals followed revivals, some of them of great power; and Methodism gathered fruit in every town of New England.

Revivals were so general, wherever the Methodist itinerant went, that they were properly considered a part of Methodism itself, — not accidentally accompanying it, but an essential quality belonging to it. The preachers measured their success as they saw them prevail; the church rejoiced and was encouraged as it felt their effects; and the world without considered that Methodism fulfilled its mission, in proportion as it was attended with revivals.

The beginning of the present century, and for several years after, formed a kind of special revival epoch in Methodism. Distinguished as Methodism had been before this time for its revival spirit, the effect of this spirit now assumed demonstrative proportions, and swept over the country with such power that it far exceeded all precedent. For fifteen years it continued, — specially affecting at times all parts of the country, — and increased the membership of the church nearly fourfold.

To give a particular account of every revival would be impossible: it would require a history of every Methodist society in the land. In some instances, however, a revival would extend over large districts of country, and embrace the domain of States. In 1800, one of this kind began in Kentucky, and spread through Tennessee and Ohio, — indeed, through all the newly

populated region of the West. It is distinguished, even to this day, as *the great revival.* It began, too, under unpromising auspices, and can hardly be said to have been anticipated; it commenced at a simple rustic sacramental service, near the Red River, in Tennessee. The religious interest became so intense that the meeting lasted several days; and the people, attracted to it from several miles around, came together bringing their provisions and bedding, and built themselves tents and huts for their accommodation. This improvised arrangement was the first *camp meeting* in this country. The remarkable effects of this meeting soon led to the appointment of others like it, that were more notable in their results than the first; and hundreds were reported as the subjects of conversion. The following year, these "camp meetings" were multiplied all over Kentucky and Tennessee, and soon after in Ohio. Immense crowds attended them, — sometimes as many as ten and fifteen thousand people. Their effects were extraordinary, if not extravagant. Several hundreds, at some of these meetings, professed conversion. The excitement became general throughout the whole West, and many thousands were added to the church.

The flame thus kindled in the West burnt eastward, and spread over all parts of Methodism. In Baltimore and throughout Maryland, in Delaware and New Jersey, in Philadelphia and throughout all Pennsylvania, in the State of New York and over New England, there appeared one general sweeping revival: sinners were awakened, and hundreds were converted. The church was clothed with increasing life and vigor, and Methodism marched on toward its destined place of religious influence and power in the nation.

Dr. Stevens has very aptly characterized Methodism as "a revival church in its spirit, a missionary church in its organization." These two characteristics can never be separated. They can hardly dwell apart. The time can never come when revivals shall cease, and Methodism shall prosper. The revival spirit in the church gives it beauty and fruitfulness, as the overflowing waters of the Nile impart to all the surrounding country richness and vegetation. As the life-blood from the heart gives vigor and health to the body, so the revival spirit in the system of Methodism invigorates it, and makes it active and healthy.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EPISODE. — METHODISM ADAPTING ITSELF TO PERMANENCY AND EFFICIENCY.

"So were the churches established in the faith!"

WE propose to relieve the reader by an episode, a fancy sketch, "founded on fact;" not necessarily unreal because it is unauthenticated. One can easily imagine how what we describe might have transpired: if it is apocryphal, it must not, therefore, be regarded as untruthful; parables are lawful narratives.

The scene is laid along one of those alternately swampy and sandy roads stretching through the vast pine-forests of North Carolina. It is in the month of February, 1785. Two plainly-clad, solemnly-earnest men, on horseback, with saddle-bags of the peculiar kind used by Methodist itinerants, and containing all their worldly gear, are wending their way southward to the city of Charleston, S.C. They have just left the first Conference held in North Carolina, and the first held after the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, and are on their way to attempt to plant Methodism in Charleston.

The elder of these men is Francis Asbury, but recently elected and ordained a superintendent of the new Church. The younger is Jesse Lee, a man who is to

become well known in the Church as the founder of Methodism in New England. He has already consecrated his life to the itinerant work, and has felt deeply interested in every thing connected with the prosperity of Methodism. Lee has been so occupied in his circuit labors in North Carolina, that he has not attended the session of the General Conference; and he is endeavoring to learn from his senior every thing respecting the proceedings of that historic Conference. The bishop is cheerfully communicative, and relates to his junior what has transpired at Baltimore. He describes the personal appearance and the courteous dignity of his associate superintendent, Dr. Coke; his devout, guileless character, his sanctity, and his humility. He speaks in strong praise of Coke's sermon at his ordination, and its solemn impressiveness on the congregation, and especially on his own mind. Asbury tells his junior, with all the confiding frankness of a brother, with what reluctance and fear he had consented to assume the great responsibilities of his new office, although given him by the unanimous suffrages of his brethren. He talks freely, and gives his opinion of the various laws and regulations that were adopted at the Conference, and that were henceforth to make the economy of the Church. He refers, with a filial respect and with grateful reverence, to the important assistance given by Wesley in his timely preparation for the work the Conference was to perform, and how this assistance has given assurance to the members in the responsibility they have assumed. He speaks with manifest pleasure of the unanimity and loving spirit of all the preachers present at the Conference, and their hopefulness that the new organization, and the independence of the Church, would be the begin-

ning of a grand era of extensive and powerful revivals throughout the connection.

These two men have journeyed thus for several miles; when the bishop quietly slackens his pace, and, letting his reins fall loosely, turns to his companion, and says, "Brother Lee, I am very often and seriously impressed with the remarkable signs of the hand of God in our history as a religious people. When I first met Dr. Coke, and heard what Mr. Wesley had done towards making us an independent church, I was greatly shocked. I trembled for its results; I could hardly be reconciled to it; but, the more I considered it, the more I was persuaded it was the Lord's doings. Since our Conference, I have had strangely pleasant impressions that God designs great things for us; and that he will, if we are true to our calling of spreading Scripture holiness over this continent, make of us a great people. It seems to me that we shall be spread out over these States, so that one can hardly 'count the dust of Jacob, or the number of the fourth part of Israel.'

"You may smile at the greatness of my expectations; but I cannot help believing that Methodism is to perform a great part in determining what shall be the future religious character of this nation. Our peculiar itinerant system seems to be made on purpose, and to be so well fitted to extend itself with the increasing and widely-extending population, that we can carry the good tidings of salvation to every family in the land. We can expand indefinitely with the nation; and, without limit to our bounds, we can dwell safely in every part,—the saving health of this inevitably great people.

"I have been meditating on our mission to Charleston. We are going to attempt to introduce Methodism

into that city. Fifty years ago, Mr. Wesley went there, and to the adjoining city, Savannah, a missionary from beyond the sea; but his mission failed, and he returned home discouraged, as much dissatisfied with his own religious state as with the failure of his mission. Why do we hope to succeed? Is it not because we go to tell them of a religion that has affected our own hearts; that we have felt and seen? Wesley could not do this. He said, 'I went to convert others; but, alas! who shall convert me?' He came, a Christian Pharisee, to convert men to the observance of rituals and forms: we go to declare the efficacy of salvation by faith in Christ, and the blessed assurance that every man may have of it by the Holy Ghost. What a lesson his failure teaches us! — what else, than that every effort to save men but by faith will always be a failure?

"But, my dear brother, the providence of God, displayed in our recent organization as a church, is not more manifest in that event than it has been in every step of Methodism, from its beginning to the present hour. Have you never thought that Methodism is *providence philosophically illustrated?* 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing;' and providence always implies concealment. But true philosophy is wisdom applying proper means to secure an end. The means that have opened before us our entire progress as a people have been so wisely ordered, that I say Methodism is providence philosophically illustrated.

"Not fifty years ago, and we were no people; and, lo! we 'have become two bands.' How the Divine Providence is shown in the preparation of Wesley to be the great evangelical reformer of this century! I have often thought of him as he sat in that Moravian band

in Aldersgate Street, a poor, contrite, struggling penitent. His only solicitude and thought was about himself. His only prayer was, 'What must I do to be saved?' Some say he planned Methodism. Not at all. His only concern was how he could himself be saved. If any one had said to him that he was to be the leader of a great people, who should rise up and call him blessed, it would have seemed as improbable and absurd as if some one had said to Saul of Tarsus, when he was stricken to the earth near Damascus, 'You are to be the great Christian Apostle to the Gentiles; you are to be the chief teacher of the religion of that very Jesus that you are now persecuting.' No, no: every step of Wesley's mysterious course was providentially concealed from his own view until the time came, and, as it seems, he was divinely instructed to take it. Sometimes it appears as if he was thrust forward against his prejudices, and only yielded, lest, by resisting, he should be found disobeying the divine lesson. A providential intervention or direction opened his apparently concealed path, and, by the wisdom of its counsel, made it more certain that he was guided by the Lord.

"Our history in this country has been not less plainly of God than the history of Methodism in England. Embury, a humble carpenter and local preacher, began, it would seem reluctantly, to preach, in his small house in Barrack Street, to a little congregation of five. Does any one suppose that he thought that 'little one would become a thousand'? Does any one imagine that he thought of doing more than to reclaim a few Irish emigrants that had backslidden from the religion they had professed in their own country? But 'to him that hath it shall be given.' He was 'obedient to the heavenly

vision.' His own mind enlarged, and the way was opened for greater things, and God pressed him and his associates into the rigging loft. The zealous soul of Barbara Heck led her to desire a chapel of their own. But who of their number saw it possible.? Yet her faith asked that the way might be opened to get it; and God said to her, and through her to the little society, 'I the Lord will do it.'

"Then Wesley sent missionaries. Did he or they suppose that they would do more than form a few provincial circuits under the direction and support of the mother connection? The Revolutionary War broke out. The relation of nearly all our preachers to England made them suspected, and destroyed their influence. They all returned, and left me alone. It seemed to me a sorry day for Methodism when they went back; and I feared that we should utterly decline. But here, again, God had a gracious care for us. It was well that they returned; for if they had not, with their feelings of loyalty to King George, we should have been everywhere suspected, and our societies scattered. God raised up a great number of young, zealous, native preachers, loyal in their feelings to the patriot cause; and the people had confidence in them, and the work went gloriously on.

"These young preachers lacked experience; and, strangely, the burden of administration fell on my shoulders. We had but little organization; we were still religious provincials, and without the ordinances. The people felt the inconvenience and their loss from this state of things, and complained. The preachers were indeed devoted to their work; but they felt that they were only 'lay itinerants,' and not full ministers of Christ. The societies felt that they were only religious

families, not a church. It could not have long remained thus. The people and the preachers would have demanded a change; and, in attempting to make it ourselves, we might have been broken into many parts. The Lord again interposed for us. We all regarded Wesley as our father and counsellor, and his advice was still a law to us. Our heavenly Father sent him to our relief. What but the spirit of the Almighty could have induced Wesley to assume the responsibility, and to provide for us as he did?

"How quickly and wisely and harmoniously we have become an organized church, with a system and laws so complete, with our terms of membership, our articles of faith, our orders of the ministry, and our plan of supervision, from the humblest class-member to the general superintendent, all complete! 'It is the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes.' Shall we not regard it as the voice of our God, bidding us trust him, and go forward to the greater things that are before us? Oh! I believe we have only entered the threshold of a wonderful and glorious future. I seem to hear God saying, as he said to Abraham, 'Unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries.'

"Christianity is a law of constant religious development, and Methodism must adopt and practise this law if it would prosper. We have probably done all that we could now do to make our economy perfect. I think it has been well done. But there will be a necessity, as we increase and have greater experience and wisdom, to make some changes. There is, however, a danger, as there is in all independent bodies, from excessive legislation. I hope we may be saved the peril of running before we are sent. Nevertheless, some

modifications and improvements must be made in our system. Our present economy is almost exclusively Anglican. It is made after the model of the Wesleyan body, in all except our orders in the ministry, and is more hierarchical than I think will be pleasant to an American people. The tendency here is to republicanism, and the Church will become more and more in sympathy with the institutions of the land. One thing that the Conference adopted, out of respect to Mr. Wesley, will, I think, fall into disuse. He provided for us a form of public prayer. It was a proof how tenaciously he still adhered in his affections to the English Church. But our people do not believe in reading prayers: it is a yoke they will not long wear.

"Among the first things that we must do will be to regulate and define the work of our Conferences. Now they are entirely subject to me. I have the same authority over them that Wesley has over the Wesleyan Conference. He appoints the time, hears its deliberations, but makes all its decisions. Americans will insist on doing their own voting, and regulating their own sessions. Then, again, these separate District Conferences are really the organic bodies of the Church, and must make its laws. But how utterly impracticable it will be for a dozen such conventions to pass any law in which they will all agree! They will require an opportunity for mutual deliberation and consultation. Their dissociation will work independence in each, if it does not destroy the homogeneousness of our people. There must be some common body or conference of our ministers, like to the one we have just held in Baltimore. I know this will be very inconvenient; and, if we increase and extend as we have done, it will be im-

practicable. Then we must have a representative Conference.

"There is another matter that will probably be modified by the action of future Conferences. I refer to the 'allowance' that is made for our preachers and their families. It is a perplexing question, that will be difficult to decide. Thus far we have settled the plan, that all ministerial support shall be by the voluntary offerings of the people. This is different from that adopted by most other Christian denominations; but I think it is scriptural, and I hope it will never be changed. It will be a melancholy hour for Methodism if the appointment of a preacher shall ever be made to depend on a stipulated price that he shall receive for his services. I do not, however, have much fear from this source. I have more fear lest we shall provide that he may receive too much. If we allow him to receive a very liberal support, it will make too great a temptation for men to enter our ministry for what they are to get, rather than from the love of souls. Besides being then a burden on the societies, we shall lose the respect and affection of the people. They will think that we care more for the fleece than the flock. The Conference decided that the most a preacher shall receive is sixty-four dollars a year, and the same amount for his wife. This surely is not too much. No man will find much inducement in this sum to tempt him to endure the privations and to do the work of a Methodist preacher. On the other hand, it may be too little to meet his necessities if he is a man of a family. It may be a bar to many in obeying the call of God, and prevent some of them from becoming itinerants. I would like it if it would prevent our young men from getting married. If they

could all be induced to remain single for the sake of Christ and the Church, that which is now allowed would be sufficient; for single men live among the people. But they will not: they will marry. They do not believe in celibacy. I fear too many of them will come to care more 'how they may please their wives' than 'how to please Christ.' And then, next, they will locate, unless provision is made for a better support. It's a perplexing question. But I suppose the married ones will soon get the majority, and then they must have better pay. I hope the Church will be cautious how it goes very far in that direction. I would rather keep the preachers single, and so would the people.

"We shall have to devise some further method of supervision over all our preachers. Wesley has his 'assistants' and his 'helpers,' and we have attempted to practise the same. But it is very superficial as a plan of supervision. I do not mean that we want a system of surveillance: this would be oppressive and mean. We need our work to be districted, and one of our older or more experienced brethren to have the charge of each district, to instruct and encourage the young preachers, and to counsel and direct the societies. He would be a kind of sub-bishop, and we should be made uniform in our administration and discipline. But this will come in good time.

"It has occurred to me, since our Conference in Baltimore, that some regulations must soon be made in reference to a very important and useful class of men: I mean the local preachers. They are like a right arm to our itinerancy. They have pioneered the way for Methodism in many places. As it is, they are dependent on the will of a preacher whether they shall be

licensed or not, and this may be altogether too capricious. These lay preachers will probably be as numerous as the itinerants themselves; and they ought to receive their license in some uniform way, and be held accountable to the brethren who know them for their conduct and the use of their gifts. It cannot be long before something of this kind will be done.

"I said we had probably done as much as we could just now do, at our recent Conference. But there are still other things that the church will be called to look to, and that will require all its wisdom to determine what is best to do. As we become a large, established people, we shall have a great amount of church property. Already we have many chapels. True, the most of them are small, rude buildings; but the time will come when they will be numbered by thousands. As our people increase in wealth and taste, they will build fine churches, perhaps too fine for a humble, devout people. But we must never allow these churches to be held by any tenure that can keep our preachers from occupying them, and from preaching and administering the sacraments in them. Mr. Wesley acted wisely when he built his first chapel at Bristol, and in respect to all his chapels: he has the control of them. We must imitate him, and provide that all our chapels shall be held in trust for the benefit of our societies, and open for the use of our preachers. We must never let any disaffection, in any place, wrest our houses of worship from our hands. A provision to prevent this ought to be adopted by us as soon as possible.

"There is still another subject in which I feel a deep interest. It is how we can best use the press to instruct the people in the knowledge of divine things,

and how we can in this way educate them respecting Methodism. Hitherto we have depended on England for the few books or tracts that we have circulated. We are independent now, and must have a press of our own. It would be a powerful instrument to take right home to every house the great doctrines of Christianity. I think God designs it as an efficient agent in the evangelization of the world. Wesley has done as much good by his printing as his preaching. We can do the same. We are yet so feeble and poor that we shall have to begin with small means on a small scale, and increase our publications as our facilities increase. But the time will come, if we are true to our trust, when Methodist literature will be scattered over the land like the leaves of autumn; when our children will have it in the nursery; when our young men and maidens will delight in its religious counsel; and when our fathers and mothers will be confirmed and edified by the words of wisdom, fresh from the Methodist press. It will not do to leave this work to the uncertainty and irresponsibility of individual enterprise. The church must assume the responsibility; and I hope to live to see the time.

"I will only speak of one thing more. It's a matter that perplexes me greatly. It is, What ought we to do for the education of our youth? Ought we just now to undertake any measures for general education? Dr. Coke and a few of the brethren are very solicitous that we begin at once, and have prepared a plan for building a college. I have consented to it. But I am not so clear in my mind that it is our call at present. The doctor is bent on having a college. I think it would be better to have good common schools, not

for a few only, but for the people generally. I suppose the college will be built. If the Lord is pleased with it, we shall succeed. Perhaps we are running too fast. If, however, we are to be the great church of this country that I think we shall be, we must ere long look to the education of the young. We must do it, not by one college only, and that for the children of preachers, but by schools patronized and supported by all the people in every part of the land. It should never be said that the Methodists are an ignorant people. I doubt, however, if I shall live to see the day. For the present, our attention ought not to be divided; nor should we be diverted from the great work of saving souls.

"But we must not anticipate too much. The good providence of the Lord will direct and prosper us, if we are true to our calling. Before every thing else, we must keep the fires of a revival burning on all our altars. Our ministers and people must guard and feed these fires, and make our church to enjoy a continual baptism of the Holy Ghost. We must live in a constant Pentecost. And then we must be a hardy, zealous people, to bear the message of salvation to every soul that we can reach. For many years our chief work must be for extension. There is a vast domain of this new country to be populated. The restless spirit of the nation will not remain bounded by the limits of the old colonial settlements. Emigration will lead men farther and farther into the wilderness. The time may come when the limits of the continent will form our vast boundary line. The itinerants must go with the people. Let us not fear. God will raise up the men, and we must all be pioneer preachers, as courageous, enduring, and zealous as the pioneer citizen. We must have the

spirit of Paul, and ever be reaching to the regions beyond. Our motto must be 'church extension.' We will have no solicitude about prudential regulations. The right measures for the prosperity of Methodism will come with the spirit of harmony and concession, with the spirit of wisdom and counsel; and, 'if there be any thing more, God shall reveal even that unto us.'"

The summary and hurried manner in which the Conference of 1784 was convened, the youthfulness and inexperience in legislation of nearly all its members, and the fact that all their active life had been devoted to evangelical labor, will easily account for the lack of many things that we might suppose would have been found in the enactments of that Conference, — enactments that were afterwards adopted, when more experience and reflection revealed their importance. Most of what they did adopt was what was either newly prepared by the mature wisdom of Wesley, or such regulations as they deemed valuable in the Wesleyan "Minutes." The same reasons will account for the prominence given to certain rules that subsequent years proved to be of trivial or doubtful significance.

The original discipline of the church may be taken as a transcript of the mind and heart of its makers. From this stand-point we can see why they thought it a matter for grave enactment, to decide what manner of dress should be worn by the members, or that the men and women should invariably sit apart in worship, or that the men "should sing bass" only, or that marriage with an unawakened person should be a sufficient cause to exclude the offender from the church. We can see, too, why they were so strict in defining "the

duty of preachers to God, to themselves, and to one another;" or why they were so careful in insisting that every one who desired to preach should prove that he was not a mere man-made minister, but that his call was from the Holy Ghost; or how they should "guard against Antinomianism;" or how they should "explicitly exhort all believers to go on to perfection." The original discipline was a photograph of the spirit and thoughts of its framers, — an honor to their piety, their zeal, and their entire devotedness to the work in which they were engaged.

Much as the discipline lacked of what was soon found to be essential, and the little that was introduced into it that was unimportant, we shall find it so readily and judiciously amended that the entire organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, as it now exists, was virtually completed by the close of the first twenty-five years of its history. We shall find that, although the church was cultivating and enjoying an uninterrupted spirit of revival, and was extending its domain, establishing societies, and building its chapels in every part of the land, it was, at the same time, passing through the formative periods of its polity, and perfecting its organic structure. It is a remarkable fact, that, since 1812, there has been no change, worthy of note, in the "church building." The last half-century has indeed been crowded and honored with noble church enterprises, with liberal devisings for grand developments of church resources; but the model, or organic features, of the church proper have not been changed in this time.

The terms of membership — the famous "General Rules" adopted in 1784 — were the same that Wesley had prepared in 1739 for admission to his first-formed

"United Societies." These had continued, unaltered, the condition for admission to all his societies in England and America. The Christmas Conference had only to re-enact them, as the terms of membership to the organized church. These "Rules" have commended themselves to the conscience and judgment of the people, as both scriptural and practical. They remain at present inviolate,— by a sacredly-guarded constitutional restriction,— the "only condition," for admission to the church.

Wesley also prepared concise and comprehensive articles of faith for his American brethren. These were incorporated as an organic law in the formation of the church. They have remained unchanged, and are embraced, without dissent, by the vast membership of Methodism. Dissatisfaction and secession have come from disagreement with the government or the administration of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, but never on account of its doctrines. Probably there is no other Protestant church where there is found such a hearty unanimity in respect to its creed.

The General Conference of the Methodist Church is its highest or supreme ecclesiastical assembly. It is its only legislative body, and is also judicial and executive. In 1812, it became a delegated body, composed of representatives from all the Annual Conferences. It has the comprehensive duty of a general supervision of the whole church. Yet this important body was unprovided for by the preachers, hastily assembled in Baltimore in 1784. They dissolved and separated without providing for any future sessions. The legislative power remained in the various Districts, or, as they were soon called, the Annual Conferences. Any act of one of these required the unanimous approval of all the rest, before it became

a law. The least foresight must have seen that such a polity would be not only impolitic, but practically impossible. Sound legislation would require mutual conference and counsel in the legislators. A few years would have sufficed to produce disagreement and alienation between these dissociated Conferences, and division would have followed. Asbury saw this, and proposed a remedy for the evil in a grand council, or preparatory committee, whose decisions should become laws on their unanimous adoption by the district Conferences. This was hardly an improvement. It dissatisfied all parties, had one or two sessions, and died. In 1792, a General Conference was called, composed of all the preachers. This was natural and safe, and gave satisfaction. But the widely extending church, and the great increase in its ministry, made such a body impracticable and unwieldy. The principle of legislation by representation was the popular one among the American people, and in 1808 it was adopted in the constitution of the General Conference of the Methodist Church. It remains unaltered.

We are not attempting to write prophecy, yet we cannot refrain from uttering a prediction. The composition of the General Conference will soon be changed,—not in its delegated character, but of those who are delegated. Now they are wholly clerical: the legislative power is with the ministry, laymen having no voice in it. It cannot long remain thus. The intelligence and influence of the laymen of the Methodist Church will demand, and with right, that they have some vote in determining the laws by which they are to be governed. They will soon form an associated part of the General Conference.

The Annual Conferences were materially and permanently changed in the first twenty-five years of American Methodism. They lost their legislative functions by the creation of the General Conference. They became only judicial and executive assemblies. Originally, they were undefined in their limits, and were composed of preachers in a convenient district, and assembled annually, or as often as desired by the bishop. They soon worked into constituent assemblies, with definite boundaries, and a defined legal membership, determining their own places of session. Originally, their decisions were more Wesleyan than popular: a few of the older preachers discussed the questions before them; the bishop usually decided them. Now their decisions are by vote, and they are the principal working bodies of the church.

The closing services of an Annual Conference have always been the most exciting and attractive part of its proceedings. The bishop then "reads out" the appointments of the preachers for the ensuing year. Strictly speaking, this is not Conference work, but happens then, because it is most convenient, and promotes uniformity. That a company of a hundred men should submit their destined service to the absolute direction of one man, without their interference or objection, is without a precedent in any other ecclesiastical organization. It proves their confidence in his fairness and faithfulness, their hearty disinterestedness, and their devotion to the good of the church. Nothing but a conviction that the interests of the church are best served could satisfy or justify men in yielding such an entire submission to the will of any single man. The consummation of the work is an exciting scene. "My people are but men." De-

spite all their renunciation of dictation or control in the matter, the determination where an hundred men are to live and labor, for a year, is an absorbing affair. They are to be broken up, and removed from the intimacies and Christian associations of the past year. They are to be sent, perhaps, hundreds of miles away, with all the inconvenience and burden of removal to their families; and, not unlikely, they are poorly provided for it, with a scanty purse. In their new scenes they may find new trials and perplexities. They can but feel a *decent solicitude* where they are to go. Yet heroically and cheerfully they submit. To some, the anouncement of their appointment sounds like the order of a commander sending forward the forlorn hope into the deadly breach. To others, it is like a command to march forward, and take with easy victory the field of an already conquered foe. To all, it is the signal to advance and conquer. Rarely, if ever, is there found a desponding appointee, never a rebellious one. They all hear the announcement of destiny with cheerfulness; and they enter at once with faith and courage upon their new mission.

The original Quarterly Meeting was soon materially changed, and its duties defined. It was, at first, almost exclusively a time for worship. Preaching, prayer-meetings, and love-feasts were its chief attraction. The people came for miles around, and it became a joyful religious festival. It was found, however, a convenient time for the stewards to bring together their limited class-collections, or other contributions "in kind," that they had received for the preachers; and to attend to the temporal affairs of the circuit. They were under the direction of the preacher in charge. In 1792, the Quarterly Confer-

ence was instituted as an official body. It was to be presided over by a newly provided officer, — the presiding elder. It was made the principal or only judicial and administrative power of the circuit, — the chief lay supervisory council of the local church. Its constitution and powers have scarcely been changed for the last fifty years.

One can hardly suppress a smile, that the organizing Conference in 1784 made no formal provision for the trial and exclusion of unworthy church members, or rather that such members were to be tried and excluded by the preacher only. He was to be their judge and jury and executioner. Yet this was in keeping with the whole Wesleyan policy of governing the church. The preacher was supreme. He held a patriarchal or parental control over it. Such authority would not be long endured in communities that held to the great right of "*magna charta*," — the right of trial by one's peers. Methodism easily corrected itself in this respect. In 1792, it adopted a rule for "the trial of accused persons." It was just, equitable, and scriptural; and, though brief in its process, without many "legal forms and precedents," it is confessedly without a rival in the ecclesiastical jurisprüdence of the Christian church.

But we cannot detail all the modifications that were early and properly made in the economy of Methodism. They came as experience taught what they should be, and as necessity made them important. The leaders of the church adopted as a rule, that it was better to make laws suggested by their need than those suggested by mere theory. Hence the entire polity of the church was constructed for practical use. With the Scripture plan as a model, all the parts of the building would be

symmetrical. With the earnest spirit of the age to impart vigor to its schemes, the church would be a living system of propagandism; and, with the helpful spirit of Christianity in all its members, it would conspire by every means to conserve their religious life.

Methodism, compared with all other ecclesiastical systems, has its distinctive features.

We have already referred to the General Conference, — the council for the whole church. The Annual Conference has its judicial and administrative functions, and is composed of the preachers of a given district; the Quarterly Conference supervises all the affairs of a particular church or circuit. There is another assembly, small and simple in its organization, but not the least important in the interests of Methodism, — the class-meeting. This is a company of twelve or more members, under the charge of a sub-pastor or leader. Its design is, by mutual instruction and prayer, to help each member in the experience and practice of godliness. Every church-member belongs to a class. Its weekly meetings help each member in Christian life, and cultivate among them all a pure Christian fellowship. Class-meetings have been to Methodism what the arteries are to the human system, — the avenues to communicate the life-blood to all its parts, and, by facilitating the regularity of its circulation, to impart vigor and health to the whole body.

The same symmetry and relative adaptation appears in all the official ranks of Methodism. Each officer is mutually supporting and depending on the others. The leaders have a care for the spiritual state of their classes: they are the minister's helpers. They collect the means for the minister's support, and aid the stewards in their

office. The stewards provide the temporal support of the minister, and depend on the leaders for their funds. The trustees have charge of the church property, in which all the people have an interest, and from whom they receive the means necessary to perform their duties. The exhorters and local preachers are a kind of preacher's assistants, and receive their authority from their associates of the Quarterly Conference, and are responsible to them for fidelity in their commission. The pastor or preacher has the particular care of a church, and is dependent on all other officers of the church for his success. The presiding elder is a supervisor of all the interests of the societies or ministers in a given district; the bishop is the general pastor of the whole church; but each of these is held sacredly accountable — the former to the Annual, the latter to the General Conference — for fidelity in their office; and any neglect or wrong-doing can be promptly punished. From the class-leader to the bishop, every officer in Methodism is so related, and so reciprocally dependent on the others, that all are workers together for the interest of every part. "The building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple of the Lord."

CHAPTER XIII.

WITH WHAT IT HAD TO CONTEND.

"For a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me; and there are many adversaries."

AMERICAN METHODISM proved successful. It increased in numbers so rapidly that, when it completed its organization, and established a delegated General Conference, in 1812, it had taken rank as the most numerous denomination of the land. Its extensive revivals had attracted the attention of the people to it, and proved its claim to the divine approval. Its systematic, well-balanced, and efficient economy had shown its claim to respect as a vigorous polity for evangelization and order. It had all the appliances of growth and future greatness.

But our estimate of the virtue or power of Methodism must not depend wholly on its numbers or its apparent status. Another element must assist us in this estimate. We must know and appreciate the difficulties with which it had to contend, over which it triumphed, and notwithstanding which it became so rapidly a great people. Any waterlogged craft can float with the current: it requires the clipper-built, well-rigged, and skilfully-piloted one to make rapid headway against both wind and tide. The courage and

faith of Nehemiah and his brethren were best shown when they resolutely set to removing the "rubbish," to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem; and when they valiantly persisted in their work, notwithstanding the various schemes of their enemies to defeat them.

Methodism was opposed. The variety and intensity of opposition to it has hardly found a parallel since the days of the primitive church. Its quality and its character appeared in its conquest of this opposition.

First, it had to contend with severe prejudices against its social position, both in its ministry and membership. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" said Nathaniel. With him it proved to be only prejudice: it might have been bigotry. The Jews objected to the apostles because they were fishermen or publicans. A similar complaint was urged against Methodism, as the religion of humble or mean men. It did not affect the judgment of the Jews, that Joseph of Arimathea, or Nicodemus the ruler, patronized and loved the Nazarene. It did not affect the general prejudice to the social state of Methodism in England, that Lady Huntingdon and a few noble women were its advocates and friends. Nor did it alter the social influence of Methodism in America, because men like Gough of Perry Hall, or Judge Bassett of Delaware, were its early supporters. The few of this class that were its true friends made them exceptions, more notorious and remarkable. "Not many mighty, not many noble, were called." It was from the "common people" that Methodists came. Whatever success attended Methodism, it was in no case attributable to any prestige or influence derived from the patronage of the "noble:" it grew notwithstanding the prejudice and power of worldly position arrayed against it.

The social position of the Wesleys was only *good*. That which they ultimately gained came from themselves, — the inevitable reward of genius and character. Whitefield was mean in his origin, — a common servant-boy of a country inn. He supported himself in college by menial service to his fellow-students. The "lay preachers" of Wesley were all from the humblest rank of society, — from the peasant's cottage, the day-laborer's service, or the soldier's barracks. Their converts were, with hardly an exception, from the same class with themselves. "The base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are." The company that were gathered into societies at Bristol and Kingswood, at Moorfields and Newcastle, were regarded as belonging to the lowest scale of social life in all England.

The rigidness of caste in America was less marked and less severe than in England. The country was new, and the social lines of distinction had not made such separating marks in the communities. Still they existed, in pretension at least, and wrought their influences to prejudice the ruling against the right of the humbler classes to all claim as leaders and teachers in religion. American Methodism was of humble birth. Embury, like his Master, was a carpenter, and dwelt in an insignificant house. His associates were poor emigrants. The early ministers of Methodism were without social distinction. It was the glory of their mission, "To the poor, the gospel is preached."

But this gave the enemies and opponents of Methodism a formidable weapon against it. They said, with significance and taunt, "Have any of the rulers and

Pharisees believed on him?" They claimed that a religion that gathered its converts only from the lower and meaner portions of society could not be worthy of confidence. The masses of the lower classes, always accustomed to look to those above them for direction, in religion as in other matters, joined with them in their opposition, and were their instruments, as of old, to cry out, "Away with him: crucify him." And Methodism had thus to meet and to conquer a powerful and demonstrative prejudice against its humble social life.

How wonderfully it has triumphed! Every sign of Methodism indicates it. The barn, the kitchen, and the wayside where Methodism worshipped, have changed to spacious churches, with elaborate finish, and every appliance of convenience and comfort. The once humble membership, despised and excluded from social rank, take their place now among "the princes of Israel," more in peril perhaps from the flatteries of the world than they had been before from its contempt or its frowns. Instead of being the cast-out and the "spoken against," they have come to be patronized and honored.

Early Methodism had to contend with the prejudices of the people against it, because its teachers were not *learned men.* It was especially so in the older settled portions of this country, and where other religious denominations were established, with a professedly liberally educated ministry. In newly-settled regions, where the communities were more rustic and their education limited, such prejudices were less violent or demonstrative.

The earlier itinerants did not profess to be learned, in the popular sense. They were, however, by no means ignorant men. They were generally well versed in the

knowledge of human nature; and no class of men were better students of the plain meaning of the Bible, or had greater ability in applying its truths to instruct and edify their hearers, or in showing their application to the practical duties of life. They did not profess to have a knowledge of many books: they were men of *one book*. John Wesley, the founder, was a good scholar: even his most violent opponents confessed this. Charles Wesley and Whitefield were fair scholars. With the exception of a few clergymen of the Church of England who patronized Methodism, these three were the only itinerants in England, for the first thirty years, that had received the honors of a college.

It was much the same in America. There was hardly a man to the manor born, for the first fifty years, who pretended to be liberally educated.

The lack of scholastic attainments gave to the ignorant or the pretentious a plausible pretext for opposition to the itinerant's mission. They said, "How know these men letters, having never learned? Shall these uneducated and despised men be teachers of religion?"

A sensitive mind can hardly suffer more from any kind of opposition than from contempt. Nor is there any method more confidently and commonly employed by the arrogant and proud than to use the language of scorn to overthrow those they oppose. Wherever the Methodist preacher went in the older portions of the country, especially in New England, he was met with the contemptuous question, "What do you, ignorant men? Do you think to teach the people, who have yourselves no knowledge?" The pulpits of the settled clergy abounded with such interrogations. The common mind became vaccinated with prejudice. Often

these clergy, with the spirit of Goliath, defied the itinerants with the Philistine's boast, "Come to me; and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." The spirit of their teachers so permeated the minds of the people that they looked on a Methodist preacher with scorn. They went further, and said, "None but the ignorant and weak will listen to such preachers: their converts are only among the deluded or deceived." They passed it round as a proverb, "The Methodists are an ignorant people." They made it a good reason why no opportunity or place should be allowed the itinerants to preach. Jesse Lee applied to a principal man, in a town of Connecticut, for permission to preach in the court house. The dignitary asked him, with a sneer, "if he was liberally educated." Lee replied readily, that he "had nothing to boast of; but he had education enough to carry him through the country."

This contempt for the "ignorant preachers" very often assumed the bold form of public interrogation or disputation. It was done to confuse or confound the itinerants in the presence of the people. Not unfrequently the settled minister, who presumed to be the keeper of the intelligence and conscience of his community, would undertake this agreeable service, and present himself before the circuit preacher and his audience with captious questions. Sometimes a jealous, officious deacon would act as the minister's proxy, and attempt to do the same kind of work. These attempts to balk the itinerant were so common that he was not surprised to meet them at any time. Usually the volunteer disputant found he "had reckoned without his host." The preachers became from necessity rather adepts in rep-

artee and debate. Sometimes it gave them a good opportunity to declare and maintain with triumph the great doctrines of grace; and to show, that, if they had but little knowledge of books generally, they were "at home" in the Great Book. At others, they found it convenient "to answer a fool according to his folly." Lee narrates an instance of this kind. At a certain place, after he had finished his discourse, an aspiring lawyer assailed him with questions in Latin. Lee had a little knowledge of Dutch, and answered him in that tongue. The lawyer was confounded. A friend of his, who was in the secret of his intentions, said to him, "He has answered you in Hebrew, and must be a learned man." The "limb of the law" retired abashed.

Such scenes had their use,—painful as they often were to the itinerants. They attracted the people to hear, and secured to the preacher an opportunity to preach to them the pure words of the gospel. It gave, too, an opportunity to disabuse the minds of the prejudiced, respecting the doctrines and designs of Methodism; and, what was more important, the assembled people found that these "ignorant preachers" did not speak foolishness, though it was "not in the words that man's wisdom teacheth." The learned, puffed up in their self-conceit, were confounded, because of the wisdom that they could not gainsay. The unlearned stood amazed, and often rejoiced that men like themselves spoke to them in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. The itinerants were not learned in the popular sense, but they were well qualified for the work to which they were called. They knew how to preach Christ, the Saviour of sinners; they fully comprehended the great subject of their message. When they uttered boldly

and clearly the whole counsel of God, commending themselves to every man's conscience, the deep-rooted prejudices of the people were compelled to yield; and, astonished, they confessed, "These men do show us truly the way of the Lord;" and, when the itinerants were interrogated, "Whence have you this wisdom?" they replied, "Our doctrine is not ours, but His that sent us."

The day of prejudice against "ignorant Methodist preachers" has gone by. "Wisdom is justified of her children."

American Methodism had to contend with the stern opposition of sectarians to its peculiar doctrines, and to its standard of religious experience.

Strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that religionists have usually been more resolute and inveterate to defend a favorite creed, or to maintain a peculiar form of worship, than to encourage the practical moralities of true religion. They have been more intent on hair-splitting distinctions about the meaning of "This is my body," in the eucharist, or how far the Ethiopian went into the water for baptism; more ready to "fight for a fast, or quarrel for a new moon," — than they have been to aspire to the highest attainable religious experience, or to know all that was possible of the spirit and power of godliness. They have seemed to think that the salvation of the world depended on some hypercritical shading of a particular dogma; and that they were required, under the penalty of a mortal sin, to put a severely literal construction on the command, "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Every early emigration to America imported and established in its new home the peculiar religious creed it had professed in the land from whence it came. There were diversities in these creeds; but, in whatever else they differed, they were generally one in maintaining the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism, either strongly or moderately defined. Every large denomination in America was Calvinistic. Methodism was Arminian; and between Arminianism and Calvinism there was such natural antagonism that the former could not expect to gain an entrance without the decided opposition of the latter.

Methodism has never given great prominence to the importance of a confession of dogmatic opinions. It has sought rather to initiate a new religious life, — to bring men to an assurance of the divine favor. "A desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," was its only condition of membership. It was not long after its origin, however, before it had its creed. The doctrines of Methodism, if not so prominently published, were very soon as distinctly understood by its members as its peculiar experience was plainly professed; and they were as zealously defended. In five years from its origin, at the first Conference, Wesley said, in warning his helpers, "We have leaned too much toward Calvinism." The doctrinal differences between Wesley and Whitefield — the former Arminian, and the latter Calvinistic — led each to follow different lines of labor. The great controversy between the two branches of Methodism in England was in respect to doctrines. The Wesleyan portion were decidedly and unyieldingly anti-Calvinistic. It is, therefore, easy to see with what it had to contend in its introduction to America.

It must be borne in mind, that the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism consisted almost exclusively in doctrines that immediately affected religious duty and experience; and, as these were so prominently presented in Methodist preaching, the peculiar doctrines that illustrated and enforced them were made the more obnoxious to their opponents. Whitefield saw the embarrassments the itinerants would meet, and said to Boardman in Philadelphia, in 1773, "Ah! if ye were Calvinists, ye would take the country before ye."

Wherever the itinerant went, he called on men to repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He declared it to be the duty of *all* men to do this without delay. He enforced his exhortation by the universality and freeness of the atonement; he insisted that "Christ tasted death for every man;" he offered him without reserve; he allowed no exceptions. He declared to the worst of men, that the atonement was sufficient to give him hope, and that the best of men needed it. To all this the fundamental dogma of Calvinism replied: The atonement is only for a limited and predestinated few; only a portion of the race can be saved, and these hath God from eternity foreordained to receive salvation.

Methodism also asserted that the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; that Divine illumination and assistance were freely given to every man to enable him to obey the gospel, and believe in Christ unto salvation; that he had power to reject the calls of grace, and he might or might not obey the heavenly vision; that the human will, thus assisted, was free, and it was the duty of all men to repent, and believe the gospel. Here the Methodist

preacher was met by the dogmatic declaration, that the will was not free; that the predestinated ones, and they only, would in due time be irresistibly compelled to embrace Christ, and the unelected ones could not, by any power they possessed, natural or gracious, believe on him. It was therefore the duty of men to "wait the Lord's time."

The itinerant declared that it was the duty of men to repent at once, and that repentance was both necessary and preparatory to a saving faith in Christ. But Calvinism said, "Ye cannot repent until you have believed: repentance follows the renewal of the heart by the spirit of God."

Methodism further asserted, that the new birth in Christ will be so demonstratively certain that its subject may have "a gracious assurance" of it, and that his spirit may receive the witness of the Divine Spirit that he has become a child of God: he need not remain in doubt, but, believing on the Son, he "hath the witness in himself." This was not only a peculiar but favorite doctrine of all Methodist preachers. They urged every believer to know this assurance, and to rejoice in the hope it inspired. Calvinism denied that it was possible to know this, and called it the doctrine of arrogance and presumption, and those who professed to know it deceived and deceivers. Calvinism claimed that the child of God must usually remain in ignorance and uncertainty of his adoption, and live a slavish subject of fear.

Methodist preachers and people advocated a high state of experimental godliness. They claimed that it was the privilege of every believer to be made perfect in love; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all

sin. They boldly used the phrase, "Christian perfection," and exhorted one another to attain it. "Sanctification" was a household word with them: every sermon commended it, every class and prayer meeting made it a familiar theme. Calvinism reprobated all pretension to such a state of grace. It taught that sin must remain in us, and that we could only be saved from it at death. It taught that St. Paul had reached the highest state of a Christian on earth, when he was continually crying, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

The itinerant taught, "By faith ye stand." Methodism declared that it was possible for one who had once been converted to fall "foully and finally" from the divine favor, through unbelief and unfaithfulness; and that such an one might ultimately be lost. This was an essential corollary of the doctrine of free will. He was continually crying, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." But Calvinism said, "Once in grace, always in grace;" that a man who had been truly converted could never backslide so as to forfeit or fail of heaven. The irresistible grace that brought him to Christ would hold him with the same irresistibility to the end of his life. Christ knoweth his own sheep, and "none shall be able to pluck them out of his hand."

These were the principal antagonisms between Arminianism and Calvinism. They were, all of them, practical ones, and not mere theories. In Methodism, they begun with the first statement of duty to the guilty, and the first offer of pardon to the penitent, and ran all through its teaching, respecting the progress of the Christian's life, to the final exhortation to be faithful until death. The Methodist preacher could not and would not abate or compromise the importance of these

doctrines. He never delivered a sermon but some of them stood prominently out. They were the life and soul of his teaching.

On the other hand, the advocates of Calvinism were as industrious and decided in opposing them. The pulpit of every prominent denomination of the land uttered and repeated its denunciations against them. They were called "the doctrines of devils." The people were warned against Methodist preachers, as "wolves in sheep's clothing." They were published, in pamphlets and more imposing volumes, as Satan in the form of "an angel of light," deceiving, if possible, the very elect. Sermon followed sermon, vindicating the "doctrines of grace,"—as Calvinism was called. The itinerants were assailed, and drawn into controversy, at their various appointments, and compelled to defend Methodism against every form of cavil and misrepresentation. Opprobrious and deceiving names and epithets were applied to them, to cast reproach on their doctrines. They were called "Universalists," and charged with holding to the final salvation of all men; "Pelagians," and accused of believing in the merit of works. They were charged with denying human depravity, because they taught a gracious ability or freedom of the will. They were nicknamed "Perfectionists," and accused of believing in a religious state where it was impossible to sin. They were charged with advocating "falling from grace," and being "to-day a saint, and the next day a devil."

Such were some of the hindrances that early Methodism had to overcome, because of the doctrines it taught. Its ministers had to imitate Nehemiah and his associates in rebuilding Jerusalem, and, while they held

in one hand the trowel to rear the walls, held the sword in the other to defend themselves and their work.

What was the result of the contest of doctrines? Despite of prejudices and preconceived suspicions, the people were induced to examine the merits of the Methodist creed, and the nature of the controversy. No people ever become more decided converts than those who find that they have been misled or deceived. The popular belief was very soon radically changed, and Methodist doctrines were received with favor. The public mind, which, at the introduction of Methodism, was generally in sympathy with Calvinism, has been "soundly converted," and is now as generally Arminian. The tone of preaching in the pulpits of America has been not less decidedly changed than the popular belief. Who now hears a sermon on "unconditional election," or on "irresistible grace"? While the creed of Methodism has been permeating the minds of the people, the application and influence of it have been doing more. They have wrought a great and effectual change in religious character. The despised and reprobated Arminian doctrine has triumphed, and men have been saved, — practically as well as theoretically.

There were various other hindrances thrown in the way of Methodism to arrest its success. In some places they were accused of being "*intruders* into other men's parishes, — would-be shepherds, stealing into the folds of other keepers, and robbing them of their sheep." Ecclesiastical authority and popular prejudice were united to keep out the "interlopers." It was strange, but true, that most of the religious people of this country were personally, or the immediate descendants of, those who had come hither to enjoy freedom of conscience in wor-

shipping God. Yet they indulged much of the intolerant spirit from which they had suffered, and, to the extent of their ability, denied to others the very rights to enjoy which they had emigrated. Nearly all New England was mapped out with parish lines, with its settled pastor, who was presumed to have a kind of pre-emption right over the religious opinions and interests of all who dwelt within his lines. The parish church was a kind of politico-ecclesiastical institution, to which every inhabitant was attached, and for the support of which every one was taxed. It was a parish monopoly, of which the parish minister was the head. It had persecuted and hung the Quakers. It had banished Roger Williams to the hospitality of the Narragansett chief, because of the independence of his conscience; and, when the Methodist preachers came, they were met by a similar intolerance,—not of political banishment, but they were treated as intruders, and were exposed to every petty annoyance that religious bigotry could suggest. They were arrested and fined for performing the marriage service, on the plea that they had no parishes. Methodist members were compelled to pay taxes for the support of the legal church; and, in default, their property was seized, and sold on the auctioneer's block. They were all treated as trespassers or violators of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of other men. But against all these things Methodism successfully contended, and made progress. In ten years from its first introduction, Methodism had established a rival parish in almost every town in New England. In a few years more, it had succeeded, by the co-operation of other sects, in removing every legal disqualification of its supporters for equal religious privileges with the "standing order."

In New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, the Methodist itinerants had to contend with similar opposition, as intruders. It was not maintained by legal forms, but not less pretentious and arrogant in its moral claims. Preoccupancy was asserted as the right of title, and priest and people generally treated the Methodist preachers as poachers on the manors of other people. But the itinerants held and practised, "The field is the world." The Tory priests of the Established Church, in Maryland and Virginia, deserted the country and their flocks at the breaking out of the Revolution. The native patriot itinerants of Methodism remained loyal, and were steadfast in their work, and it prospered; and at the close of the war they had both these States in their possession. Their triumph, if not so signal, was not less sure in the other States; and, when Methodism completed its organization by a delegated General Conference in 1812, it had established itself so firmly and influentially in every part of the country that the cry of intruder had ceased to be heard.

Various petty annoyances were also cast in the itinerants' way. Sometimes they took the form of scandal. Being comparative strangers in the communities, it was difficult for the preachers to meet and refute these scandals. Now they were called Tories in disguise, seeking to overthrow the Government. Again they were said to be bankrupts from other parts of the country, and adopting this itinerant mode of life to obtain a living. Sometimes they were reported to be licentious men, entering into men's houses, and leading captive silly women. Or they were covert Romanists, attempting to overthrow the Protestantism of the country. As

they usually rode good horses, they were reported to be horse-jockeys or horse-thieves, banded together to steal.

Every artful device was employed to frustrate or render vain their appointments for preaching. Sometimes the parish minister would give out a meeting for himself at the same time and at the place where the itinerant was to preach; or he would hold one near by, and insist that the people should attend it under penalty of his displeasure. Sometimes the school-house, where the itinerant was to preach, would be closed against him by the authority of the deacon or an influential opponent. Often Methodists were interrupted in their worship by the ill manners and arranged disturbances of the "baser sort," countenanced and encouraged by men of better repute.

With all these attempts to prevent their preaching or to destroy their influence, Methodist preachers were quite familiar in early times. But such opposition tended rather to advance than hinder the success of Methodism; and what was designed to destroy became more a means of furthering the advance of the truth. If they were excluded the school-house or court-house, the few rejected Methodists were aroused by it to effort, and they built themselves a chapel. There are hundreds of these in the land, erected because of the spirit awakened by such exclusion. Any attempt to build a counter fire, by making another meeting at the same time, drove the people to the Methodists; any disturbance of worship created a sympathy for the disturbed, and provoked those annoyed to demand their right quietly to wait on God without disturbance. Oftentimes those who conspired to hinder the onward march

of Methodism were compelled in grief to say one to another, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after" them; or, convicted of their sins, they confessed their wickedness, repented of their hostility, and were converted, and became devoted supporters of Methodism.

CHAPTER XIV.

WITH WHAT IT HAD TO CONTEND. — CONTINUED.

"In journeyings often, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness."

ANY account of Methodism, either in England or America, without a distinct notice of the perils to which the early itinerants were exposed, or the severe privations they endured, or the unparalleled ministerial service they performed, would be like "the play of Hamlet, with the character of Hamlet omitted." No one can understand or prize the qualities of these men without knowing their frequent hair-breadth escapes from death, their cheerful "bearing the loss of all things," and their indomitable zeal, "in season and out of season," to preach the gospel to every creature.

We who live in this day, and have entered into their labors, can hardly appreciate the full meaning of the "life or death" appointments of the olden-time Methodist preachers. At present, the bishop's announcement usually means that the appointee shall go to a spacious church, already built; most likely to remove his family to a comfortably furnished parsonage, cosily located near by the church. It says to him, Go to a people with loving, generous hearts to supply all your wants;

to a community who will surround you and your family with pleasant society, and who will honor and respect you and your calling. What matters the change to him of one or two hundred miles, if the transit is by an easy railway carriage, and he is ever to be in the midst of such pleasant surroundings?

How unlike this was the signal announcement that gave the preacher his field of labor in the year of grace 1790! Then it often meant that he should, like Abraham, go out "not knowing whither he went;" that he should find his preaching places in private houses, or in barns, in school-houses, or by the wayside. The sheep of his flock were to be found scattered widely over the hills, or in the valleys. His home should be where hospitality might give him lodging for the night; and for his family, he must find a resting place in some rustic tenement, with scanty appliances for comfort. He was to receive an "allowance" that would tax his financial genius to preserve soul and body in fellowship. His circuit should embrace a domain as extensive as some present Conferences. He should be buffeted and threatened by the "baser sort," and despised and slandered by those of nobler station. Such was very commonly the prospect of an itinerant, as he left an Annual Conference in the early days of Methodism. A dark look, even for the most courageous hearts.

It is impossible to make a comparison between the earlier and later generations of Methodist preachers. The true estimate of the material of which men are made must be formed from their fitness to do, and their faithfulness in doing, the work which Providence assigns them. We cannot determine the stature of the earlier preachers by asking how well they would perform the

work to which the preachers of this day are called. They might not have gained a great reputation as stationed preachers, preaching elaborate sermons twice or thrice every sabbath to the same congregation for two or three years in succession; they might not have filled with eminence the chair of an editor, or of a professor of science or belles-letters or Hebrew. And yet they might. True genius is wonderfully adaptive to the demand made upon it; and they were men of genius. Nor can we say how the men who do these things now, with honor to themselves and with acceptance to the people, would have had the nerve and courage and zeal to withstand the buffetings of the fathers, or to endure their hardships. Perhaps they would have done it nobly. Every man is to be judged by the requisitions of his day, and the manner in which he meets them. By this rule the early itinerants were great men. They had the work of heroes to perform, and they did it heroically. "There were giants in those days."

That they were faithful to their conscience, and to the truth, and to the people, no one has ever presumed to question. They preached the word plainly and honestly. They made no compromises with sin. They showed indomitable zeal, that many were pleased to call enthusiasm. Their lives conformed to their own teachings. They had withal an unyielding faith in the power of the truth to accomplish that for which it was sent. All these qualities are marks of true greatness under any circumstances; but they were made unquestionable virtues from the circumstances in which they were shown. They indicated the integrity and courage of Methodist preachers, who in peril, in the city and wilderness, in weariness and want, in persecution and death, were

true and steadfast to their high commission, and failed not, in every place and to all, to declare the whole counsel of God.

Early Methodism had to contend with *open*, and often with *violent persecution*, — a persecution that exposed both preachers and people to personal assaults, and sometimes to the peril of their lives.

For more than thirty years, Methodism in England suffered a series of attacks on its subjects, in every form that wickedness and malice could devise. There is hardly a shire or parish in the kingdom that has not been the place of some historic event, where itinerants were maltreated, and their disciples were scourged and put in jeopardy of death, — where the houses of Methodists, and of those who harbored them, were broken into and damaged, the furniture destroyed, and the persons of their occupants rudely handled. These shires and parishes, where Methodism is now a ruling religious power and honored, were once in a state "little less than civil war," in their violent persecutions of its followers.

Dr. Stevens, in his elaborate history of Wesleyan Methodism, has given us frequent narratives of these persecutions. We will give his interesting grouping of the demonstrative manner in which they were shown in 1744: "The country was in general commotion, occasioned by threatened invasions from France and Spain, and by the movements of the Scotch Pretender. Reports were rife that the Methodist preachers were in collusion with the Papal Stuart. All sorts of calumnies against Wesley flew over the land. He had been seen with the Pretender in France; had been taken up for high treason, and was at last safe in prison, awaiting his

merited doom. He was a Jesuit, and kept Roman priests in his house in London. He was an agent of Spain, whence he had received large remittances, in order to raise a body of twenty thousand men to aid the expected Spanish invasion. He was an Anabaptist; a Quaker; had been prosecuted for unlawfully selling gin; had hanged himself. That he was a disguised Papist, and an agent for the Pretender, was the favorite slander. He was summoned by the justices of Surrey, London, to appear before their court, and required to take the oath of allegiance to the king, and to sign the Declaration against Popery.

"Mobs raged meanwhile in many places. In Staffordshire, the Methodists were assailed, not only in their assemblies, but in the streets and at their homes. At Walsal, the rioters planted a flag in public, and kept it flying during several days. In Darlston, women were knocked down, and abused in a manner, says Wesley, too horrible to be related. Houses were broken into, and furniture destroyed and thrown out into the street. Charles Wesley could, at a later date, distinguish the houses of Methodists by their 'marks of violence,' as he rode through the town. In Wednesbury, the disorders were again frightful, and for nearly a week the mob reigned triumphant. They were gathering all Monday night, and on Tuesday began their riotous work, sanctioned, if not led on, by gentlemen of the town. They assaulted, one after another, all the houses of those who were called Methodists." Houses, furniture, and wearing apparel were all damaged or destroyed. "All this time none offered to resist them. Men and women fled for their lives. Some of the gentlemen who had instigated these dreadful scenes, or threatened to turn away

collier or miner from their service if he did not take part in them, now drew up a paper for the members of the society to sign, importing that they would never invite or receive any Methodist preacher again. On this condition it was promised that the mob should be checked at once; otherwise the victims must take what might follow. The pledge was offered to several; but the faithful sufferers declared, one and all, 'We have already lost all our goods, and nothing more can follow but the loss of our lives, which we will lose, too, rather than wrong our consciences.'

"Wesley hastened from London to sustain the persecuted societies in the riotous districts; for it was his rule, he wrote, 'always to face the mob.' At Dudley, he learned that the lay preacher had been cruelly abused at the instigation of the parish minister; the peaceable itinerant would probably have been murdered, had not an honest Quaker enabled him to escape disguised in his broad-brimmed hat and plain coat. At Wednesbury, he found none of the magistrates willing to protect the Methodists. One of these functionaries declared that their treatment was just, and offered five pounds to have them driven out of the town. . Another delivered a member of the society up to the mob, and, waving his hand over his head, shouted, 'Huzza, boys! Well done! Stand up for the church!' The sound of family worship in the evening was the signal for breaking into the Methodist houses. Charles Wesley passed to Nottingham, and there also the war had begun. The Methodists were driven from the chapel, and pelted in the streets. The mayor passed by, laughing, while Charles Wesley was preaching at the town-cross amid flying missiles from the mob. At Litchfield, 'all the rabble of the

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county were gathered together, and laid waste all before them. At Sheffield and Thorp, he found the mob had relented; and the societies enjoyed rest. At Wakefield and Leeds, he learned that the Methodists had been excluded from the Lord's Supper at the parish churches.

"He pursued his way to Newcastle, where disturbances were also breaking out." He succeeded in quieting the mob for the time. "The next day, however, the storm raged again among another class. They thronged about the chapel, struck several of the brethren, and threatened to pull down the pulpit. He afterwards learned that, at the same hour, the chapel at St. Ives was pulled down. At Epworth, he met on the common a lay preacher, Thomas Westall, who was driven away from Nottingham by 'the mob and mayor.' As he passed through Bristol again, the mob was tearing down John Nelson's house, but fled as the evangelist and his companions approached with singing.

"The storm meanwhile swept over Cornwall also." We might multiply the instances where, in other places, the Methodists were called to "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods," or where they were hunted and abused with Satanic fury. John Downes, a lay preacher, was impressed as a soldier, and placed in Lincoln jail. John Nelson was also seized for the army, and sent to prison. Thomas Beard, another assistant, shared the same fate.

"Wesley went into Cornwall, and maintained his ground. To retreat was to abandon the demoralized populace to its moral wretchedness; to persevere, he knew, would conquer its turbulence, in spite of the influence of the clergy, who were denouncing the Methodists as enemies of the Church and State, — Jacobites

and Papists. He did persevere, and, at last, won the well-deserved victory. Methodism prevailed throughout all Cornwall (and indeed in all the other places where it had been persecuted); and, in his old age, his journeys through its towns and villages were like 'royal progresses' or triumphal marches. The descendants of those who had mobbed him crowded his routes, and filled the steps, balconies, and windows, to see and bless him as he passed; and, in our day, Cornwall and the other counties of England witness, in all their towns and hamlets, to the power of the gospel as preached by Wesley and his persecuted itinerants."

The hostility to Methodism on American soil was less violent and demonstrative than in England. There was here no State church and clergy, with a semi-civil authority, to encourage and lead the rabble; the sentiment here was more favorable to freedom in religious opinions and worship. The spirit of persecution, however, was not uncommon, and, notwithstanding the restraints that were on it, would often betray its hostility to the Methodists. The knowledge of these things has come to us by tradition more than by written history. The primitive Methodist preachers were so much engaged in preaching, meeting the societies, and travelling, that they had but little time to write the events of their labors. "They were making history, not writing it." But few of them have left any records of their work; yet every one of these have given us instances of the "ingenuity of wickedness" in devising methods for their persecution. They may be taken as samples of the way in which all the itinerants were treated, and with what they had to contend.

The ordinary opponents of Methodism were simply

disturbers, — persons who attempted to show their contempt of Methodists, or their hostility to Methodist worship, by various kinds of annoyances at its religious services. These annoyances were not so threatening as they were often embarrassing to the worshippers or diverting to the worship: they were different kinds of low, inglorious incivilities, such as base and depraved minds can invent to break up a meeting, or distract its services. Sometimes they were shown by the ringing of bells, blowing of horns, and hallooing around the place of worship. Sometimes they were more bold, and by mocking the services, and by laughing, and conversation in the meetings, showing contempt for them. After the introduction of camp-meetings, the "disturbers" made these a favorite resort, and showed their hatred of Methodists by rallying at these meetings, as if they were "lawful plunder" for their depredations, and annoyed them by every conceivable wicked invention, from noisy conversation during service, to attempts to destroy the tents and break up the meetings. The traditional accounts of these things by a few of the old-time Methodists that linger "this side Jordan," are but exponents of those painful and mortifying disturbances to which the fathers were everywhere subject in the early days of Methodism. But these traditional narratives go further: they almost invariably add that the disturbers were among the number of the converts, and that those who "came to mock remained to pray."

But the malice of persecution was not always satisfied with a comparatively harmless annoyance to the order and peace of religious services. It was frequently more desperate and damaging. The Methodists, especially the itinerants, had to meet the perils of personal vio-

lence that sometimes threatened their lives, and, in a few instances, made them martyrs. Every preacher of the last century, who has left his "journal," gives us instances in which he or his brethren were the victims of such violence.

Philip Gatch was one of the first and noblest of the native preachers. He joined the first Conference in 1773, and was a zealous itinerant from New Jersey to North Carolina. He was in perils often. While on Kent Circuit, Maryland, he was seized on his way to his appointment by two men on horseback, and turned back to a tavern. One of the men applied a heavy cudgel to his shoulders on his way there. They were there joined by others of like spirit with his assailants, and he was ordered to call for something to drink: he refused to do it. While his opponents were disputing what should be done with him, he escaped. At another time a mob arrested and tarred him. They began by applying the tar to his left cheek. The man who officiated called for more tar, and laid it on liberally. At length one of the company in mercy cried out, it is enough. The last stroke was drawn across the naked eye-ball, and caused severe pain. He never entirely recovered its effects. While on a circuit in Virginia, he was seized by two stout, rough men, and his shoulders wrenched so violently that they turned black. It was some time before he regained the use of them.

Benjamin Abbott, among the most notable and resolute preachers of those times, was frequently assaulted. While preaching in Woodstown, N.J., the mob assailed him, and, with bayonets presented at his breast, threatened his life. He says, "If ever I preached the terrors of the law, I did it while one man was threatening to

run me through, and soon found he could not withstand the force of truth: he gave way, and retreated to the door. They endeavored to send him back again; but in vain, for he refused to return."

Freeborn Garrettson tells us of his frequent persecutions for the sake of Christ. While on Brunswick Circuit, Virginia, in 1777, he was often threatened, interrupted in his sermons, and assailed by armed men. One of his friends was shot (but not mortally) for entertaining him. The next year, in Queen Anne County, Md., he was attacked by a man, formerly a judge of the county, and felled to the earth by a blow on the head with a bludgeon. It was supposed he could not live but a few moments; but a passer by fortunately had a lancet, and bled him, and he recovered. At Dover, Del., he had hardly dismounted from his horse to preach, before the mob cried out, "He is a Tory: hang him! hang him!" He was rescued by some friendly gentlemen. At Salisbury, he learned that another mob was waiting to send him to jail. His friends insisted on his immediate departure. But he replied, "I have come to preach my Master's gospel, and I am not afraid to trust him with my body and soul." He remained, preached, and triumphed over his enemies. In Dorchester County, Md., he was arrested while preaching, and taken to Cambridge jail. He says, "For two weeks I had a dirty floor for my bed, my saddle-bags for my pillow, and two large windows open with a cold north-east wind blowing upon me." Of the effect of this arrest he writes, "The word of the Lord spread through all that county, and hundreds, both white and black, have experienced the love of Jesus Since that time I have preached to more than three

thousand people in one congregation, not far from the place where I was imprisoned, and many of my worst enemies have bowed to the sceptre of our Sovereign Lord."—"The things which happened unto him had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

Joseph Hartly, another itinerant, was seized in Queen Anne County for preaching. He gave bonds to appear for trial at the next court. Forbidden to preach, he went to his appointments, and, after singing and prayer, stood upon his knees, and exhorted the people. His enemies said he might as well preach standing on his feet as on his knees. In Talbert County, he was again apprehended, and taken to jail. But he was not silenced. The people collected around the prison; and he preached to them through the grates, and many were converted by his word. Some of the inhabitants said, that, unless Hartly was released from jail, he would convert the whole town. He was at last set at liberty; but the fruit of his prison preaching was the formation of a flourishing society in the place.

George Dougherty was stationed in Charleston, S.C., in 1801. He was seized by a lawless mob, dragged through the street, his head placed under the spout of a pump, and pumped upon until he was nearly suffocated. He was saved by the resolute courage of a pious woman, who placed herself between the infuriated people and their victim, and prevented the flow of water by stuffing her shawl in the mouth of the spout. Just then a gentleman appeared with a drawn sword, declaring his intention to defend Dougherty at all hazards, and led him away.

James McCarty, an Irishman from the United States, and among the first to introduce Methodism into Canada,

was a martyr for the truth in Ernestown. His preaching was attended with great results, and provoked the bitterest hatred of its opponents. A sheriff, a captain of militia, and an engineer, determined to rid the country of him. Twice, while preaching, was he arrested as a vagabond, and both times bailed by an influential friend. But his enemies were not to be thwarted in their murderous purposes. Dr. Stevens says, "He was suddenly seized, thrust into a boat, and conveyed by four Frenchmen, hired for the purpose, down the St. Lawrence to the rapids near Cornwall. He was landed on one of the numerous solitary islands of that part of the stream, and may have perished by starvation, or have been drowned in attempting to reach the main shore; but his fate has never been disclosed."

These narratives of personal violence, suffered by the early Methodist itinerants, might be multiplied indefinitely. Scarcely one of them escaped without an experience of these trials, from Asbury the bishop, down to the humblest "circuit rider." But it is a remarkable fact, that not an instance is recorded where the itinerant deserted his post because of danger. They all adopted Wesley's motto, "Face the mob," and conquer it. What is equally remarkable, there was scarcely an instance where Methodist preachers were threatened with violence, but it proved a means to advance, rather than hinder, the progress of Methodism. Very often the chief instruments of persecution were converted, and became notorious and zealous advocates and examples of the cause they opposed. In some instances, others became the victims of severe judgments, so marked and extraordinary as to impress the community with the terrible meaning of the words, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

The itinerancy is an important part of Methodism. Whatever changes time and circumstances may hereafter require in its mode of application, it has hitherto been, and justly too, the boast of the sect. Yet an itinerant life, with a Methodistic interpretation, meaning both an annual removal from one circuit to another, and stated appointments in perhaps a dozen different towns, had its pains and penalties to a Methodist preacher.

Few persons, except those of a vagrant disposition, choose a shifting life, merely for the sake of change. The early itinerants did not prefer it to a settled one because it was more agreeable, or because it brought them ease and comfort. They consented to it, notwithstanding its perplexities, on account of the superior opportunities it gave them to do more for the cause of Christ. It was often the great "cross" of their life, and the heaviest one they had to bear. Their calling as ministers did not destroy in them that which is common to every refined mind,—the love of a permanent habitation, or the attractiveness of their own homes. It did not weaken the endearing influence of religious friendships, made strong by frequent and long associations. Their susceptibilities to such enjoyments were as acute as those of other men. How often, when weary and faint, and ministered to by unfamiliar hands, did they sing the wayfarer's song, —

> "We toil a while in tents below,
> And gladly wander to and fro,"

and sigh for the presence and attentions of a loving wife or a tender mother!

If they sung gladly, it was because they counted these things but dross, that they might win more souls

to the Saviour, and secure a better and more enduring home in heaven.

The itinerant of to-day hardly knows what it is to receive the hospitality of strangers. "The crooked places have been made straight, and the rough places smooth." But this kind of hospitality was the inheritance of itinerants of the olden time. They were engaged in opening new fields, and breaking up new ground. They had to introduce themselves, and trust the generosity and welcome of strangers. Sometimes these were unexpectedly kind, sometimes they were cold and suspicious. Not unfrequently their hospitality was wholly refused, and the preachers denied a resting place or shelter. Had their work been only on old and well-established circuits, and their "homes" been only in those historic families accustomed to give the preachers a hearty reception, the gladness of Christian hospitality would have partly atoned for their long and painful absences from their own families. But much of their labor was pioneer work. They had to depend on making friends as they went. How often their entertainment was mixed with incivility, and furnished with grudging hearts! To a refined and sensitive mind this would always be afflictive; and the itinerant's bed was sometimes made hard and uneasy, not only because of its scanty covering, but because it was made up by unwilling hands.

And yet, more painful to him than all else, he had to contend with a common sentiment, and a prejudice against him from this sentiment, that an itinerant's was a kind of vagrant life. This arose from a general conceit in the communities that a minister of Christ must be settled, and dwell among his own people. Such was

the custom of every other Christian denomination of the country. It was considered a necessary qualification for a minister. The exception in a Methodist preacher gave his enemies a good plea against his character and his work. His mode of life made him suspected and despised, and against such suspicion and contempt he had everywhere to contend.

In forming our judgment of the heroic character of the primitive itinerants, we must give them large credit for the trials they endured from *great exposures*, from *excessive labors*, and from the *inadequate provision made for their support.*

Methodism has changed in nothing more than in giving up the old circuit organizations for the modern system of stations. Sixty years ago a stationed preacher, having a single congregation to serve, was a rare exception in Methodistic usage. The whole country was laid out in ample circuits, most of them of vast extent, and requiring a travel of from three to five hundred miles every two or four weeks; some of them of such indefinite limits as to comprehend all the regions beyond as the strength and zeal of the preacher would allow him to occupy them. A presiding elder's district often embraced a domain large as a State, and included a territory now compassing two or three Conferences. These circuits and districts had to be supplied with a promptness and punctuality that never allowed a congregation to be disappointed.

The facilities for travel have also greatly changed. The roads, even in the older settled regions, were poor and rough. The newer regions had hardly any roads, and the itinerant found his way sometimes through the forests by "blazed" trees. There were no rail-cars or

steamboats, and but little of any kind of public conveyance for his convenience. In most of the country, he had to ford the streams as best he could, commonly wading them at the fording-places, in times of freshets rendered perilous, and often swimming them on horseback through rapid currents. The rustic character of the people, and the unsettled condition of the country, allowed him to have but few of the comforts, and never any of the luxuries, of life. Methodists were generally poor; and, though free in their hospitalities, the best they could do was to divide with the itinerant their common, humble fare. Frequently his lodging-place was open and exposed to the blasts of winter; and he had an extra coverlet furnished him during the night from the driving snow. He lived, for the time being, in the midst of the families where he tarried, and studied his sermons beside the open kitchen-fire, where his hostess was preparing his simple meal. Often he made the floor his bed, with his saddle-bags for a pillow. True, such experiences would be occasionally intermitted by the intervening hospitalities of wealth and abundance. No class of men found a greater diversity in their manner of living than Methodist preachers. To-day he was the guest of luxury, sleeping in ceiled houses, and resting on down. To-morrow, the guest of a log-cabin, sleeping on the ground or a puncheon floor, and kept lively in his dreams by the fleas.

Very many of the long and perilous rides, and the hard fare, of the early itinerants might be narrated. We shall limit ourselves to one or two given us by Bishop Asbury, of his own experience. He was a pattern bishop, and never shrunk from meeting the same exposures that he knew were endured by his brethren.

His example imparted to them a kind of chivalric spirit to emulate his courage and self-denial. He usually travelled on horseback from three to four thousand miles a year. Most Methodist preachers travelled as many; some of them more. He knew what it was to be in want and to abound; and so did they.

In the year 1788, Asbury left Georgia to hold a Conference in Tennessee, — the first held beyond the Alleghanies. He passed through the Holstein country, and he thus describes his route: "After getting our horses shod, we made a move for Holstein, and entered upon the mountains, the first of which I called steel, the second stone, and the third iron mountain: they are rough, and difficult to climb. We were spoken to on our way by most awful thunder and lightning, accompanied by heavy rain. We crept for shelter into a little dirty house, where the filth might have been taken from the floor with a spade. We felt the want of fire, but could get little wood to make it; and what we gathered was wet. At the head of Watauga we fed, and reached Ward's that night. Coming to the river next day, we hired a young man to swim over for the canoe, in which we crossed, while our horses swam to the other shore. The waters being up, we were compelled to travel an old road over the mountains. Night came on. I was ready to faint with a violent headache. The mountain was steep on both sides. About nine o'clock we came to Grear's. After taking a little rest here, we set out next morning for Brother Coxe's on Holstein River. I had trouble enough. Our route lay through the woods; and my pack-horse would neither follow, lead, nor drive, so fond was he of stopping to feed on the green herbage. I tried the lead, and he pulled back. I tied his

head up to prevent his grazing, and he ran back. The weather was excessively warm. I was much fatigued, and my temper not a little tried. Arriving at the river, I was at a loss what to do; but providentially a man came along who conducted me across. This has been an awful journey to me, and this a tiresome day; and now, after riding seventy-five miles, I have thirty-five miles more to Gen. Russell's. I rest one day to revive man and beast."

Asbury gives us a few notes of his return trip. "We had to cross the Alleghany Mountain again at a bad passage. Our course lay over mountains and through valleys, and the mud and mire was such as might scarcely be expected in December. We came to an old forsaken habitation in Tyger's Valley. Here our horses grazed about while we boiled our meat. Midnight brought us up at Jones's, after riding forty or perhaps fifty miles. The old man, our host, was kind enough to wake us up at four o'clock in the morning. We journeyed on through devious lonely wilds, where no food might be found, except what grew in the woods or was carried with us. Near midnight we stopped at A's., who hissed his dogs at us; but we went in. Our supper was tea. Brothers Phœbus and Cook took to the woods; old —— gave up his bed to the women. I lay along the floor on a few deerskins with the fleas. That night our poor horses got no corn; and the next morning they had to swim across the Monongahela. After a twenty miles' ride, we came to Clarksburg, and man and beast were so outdone that it took us ten hours to accomplish it."

These are only common experiences in the wearisome and toilsome journeys of this primitive bishop. His

"journal" abounds with them. They are the descriptions of the every-day lives of the pioneers of Methodism in the West. But not in the West only. The service was much the same all over the country. What it was generally may be fairly seen in Bishop Hedding's account of his first ten years of circuit life. Reviewing these years, he says, "I have averaged over three thousand miles' travel a year, and preached, on an average, a sermon a day, since I commenced the itinerant life. During that period I have travelled circuits that joined each other, through a tract of country beginning near Troy, N.Y., and going north into Canada; thence east through Vermont and New-Hampshire; and thence southerly, through Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut to Long-Island Sound. I have never in this time owned a travelling vehicle, but have ridden on horseback, except occasionally in winter when I have borrowed a sleigh, and also in a few instances when I have travelled by public conveyance or in a borrowed carriage. I have both labored hard and fared hard. Much of the time I have done missionary work without missionary money. Until recently I have had no dwelling place or home, but, as a wayfaring man, lodged from night to night where hospitality and friendship opened the way. In most of these regions, the Methodists were few and comparatively poor. I was often obliged to depend on poor people for food and lodging and horse-keeping; and though in general they provided for me cheerfully and willingly, yet I often felt that I was taking what they needed for their children, and that my horse was eating what they needed for their own beasts. I often suffered great trials of mind on this account, and have travelled many a day, in

summer and winter, without dinner, because I had not a quarter of a dollar that I could spare to buy it."

Added to their wearisome rides, their exposures and privations, the itinerants had to perform the onerous and incessant duties of their ministry. They "sowed beside all waters." They were "instant in season and out of season," to fulfil their mission. They averaged a sermon a day the year round; not to the same congregation, but to assemblies many miles apart. Their sermons were often delivered in places where they were exposed to perilous currents, or in the open air, or, what was worse, in the confined and crowded school-house or private dwelling. They met a class a day. They were literally "instant in prayer;" for they prayed with all they met. Their work was less diversified than the ministry of modern times, but none the less arduous. If it was only preaching, praying, and pastoral, nevertheless it was incessant.

The result of all these toils could easily be anticipated. Many of the preachers literally "broke down." Many others, half broken, were compelled to locate: a few of these partially regained their strength, and reentered the itinerancy. Of the six hundred and fifty who had been in the ministry at the close of the last century, over half the number had located. Of those who died, half were under thirty years of age, and two thirds before they had been twelve years in active service. Only those of great physical endurance could bear the service. They were not required to test their fitness for the work, and lap from the stream, like the chosen three hundred of Gideon's force; but they were required to prove their qualifications by severer trials, and by their ability to endure and conquer sufferings.

and toils before which men of ordinary powers fainted and died.

We must not close this chapter on the difficulties in the itinerants' path without mentioning prominently the scanty financial provisions for their support.

If the old Minutes gave as full reports of the cash receipts of the ministers as they gave of their numbers and the increase of the members, they would furnish tables for the study and wonder of a financial economist, and start the speculation how it was possible for any of the itinerants to live on the meagre sum that they received; how they could have done so large a business on such a small financial capital. Perhaps they would excite astonishment how little the people, who received such an amount of ministerial service, understood or practised the precept, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

That there would be an occasional instance of poor pay and hard fare might be expected under the best adjusted system of support that could be devised: but a stinted allowance was the common experience; exceptions to it were very few. The maximum amount allowed a preacher for a year was *sixty-four* dollars; and, if he were a married man, the same amount for his wife. In 1800 it was raised to *eighty dollars* for each; and this sum included all perquisites, or presents, and marriage-fees. Very rarely indeed did any of them receive this limited amount. Bishop Hedding tells us that during the ten first years, in which he travelled over thirty thousand miles, and preached nearly every day in the year, his average pay was about *forty-five* dollars a year; and one year he received, exclusive of travelling expenses, *three dollars* and *twenty-five cents!* The first

year he was on the New-Hampshire District, he received *four dollars* and *twenty-five cents!* He says, "My pantaloons were often patched upon the knees, and the sisters often showed their kindness by *turning an old coat* for me!" And this, it must be borne in mind, was in highly-favored New England, and since the beginning of the present century. There are authentic reports from preachers of the New-England Conference, from the year 1800 to 1805, showing that the annual receipts of each of them, during these years, did not average *seventy dollars*, including all presents; that the aggregate sum paid to all of them, numbering about twenty-five, in each of these years, was less than the amount now received by only one minister stationed in some of the Methodist churches in our cities. *One dollar and forty cents a week*, to provide food and clothing, books and medicine, and meet all the incidental expenses of a family!

The "financial exhibit" of a preacher's receipts in the newer regions of country was rather worse than this. Peter Cartwright, the veteran pioneer of Western Methodism, says, "They did not generally receive in a whole year money enough to get them a suit of clothes; and if the people, and preachers too, had not dressed in homespun clothing, and the good sisters had not made and presented the preachers with clothing, they would generally have had to retire from itinerant life, and go to work and clothe themselves."

The bishop fared no better than the priest. Asbury's allowance was sixty-four dollars. All donations of money he gave to his fellow-laborers, his fellow-sufferers. While at one of the Western Conferences, the itinerants presented such painful evidences of want, that he parted

with his watch, his coat, and his shirt for them. He was asked at another time, by a friend, to lend him fifty pounds. The bishop says, "He might as well have asked me for Peru. I showed him all the money I had in the world, about twelve dollars, and gave him five."

There is a great contrast between the olden time and the present way of paying a preacher. Now he usually receives his monthly check, or the cash, from the treasurer of his stewards, for the twelfth part of his yearly salary. It is promptly and punctually paid. How was it then? Look in upon a Quarterly Conference half a century or more ago. This was the time when the offerings for the minister were computed on his allowance. The Conference would present a scene, at least amusing to a business man of these days. It was not unfrequently painful and humiliating to the preacher himself. Then all the presents he had received for the past three months were reported and appraised. What had been paid on "allowance" in cash, or in "kind," was reckoned in. The butter and cheese, the wood and potatoes, and other commodities, are estimated and counted, to help make the quarterage of sixteen or twenty dollars. It appears like adjusting a barter account, in which one party furnishes the convenient produce of his farm, — not always convenient to the preacher, — and the other offsets it by the small valuation placed on his message of the word of life. It was well called "making up the supplies."

The burdens that fell on the preachers, from a scanty and pitiful support, were partly of their own making. True, the people, though generally poor, had often very narrow notions of what was their duty to render justly in return for what they received. In many instances

they were stingy and illiberal. But much of their illiberality came from the manner in which the preachers educated them respecting their duty. The preachers professed a virtue in asking but little, and the people fell into the convenient belief that it was the greatest virtue to give but little: the preachers disclaimed taking any thing as pay for services, and the people gave what they did as a charity.

The authors of the old Discipline of the church were studiously careful to keep out of it any hint that what they received was in any sense a *compensation.* They never said "How shall we raise the *salary?* but, how raise the *allowance?* how shall we raise the supplies?" They never said, "What is due for our services? but what is necessary for our support?" If they advised that appeals be made to make up deficiencies, it was never, exhort the people to *pay*, but exhort the people to *give.* And then they fixed the umost amount that a preacher might receive at such an insignificant figure as to impress the people that his wants, at most, were inconsiderable, and that their gifts required but little sacrifice. It is no wonder, that, taught to aim so low, the arrow usually fell far below the mark.

Severe as was this method of training the people, on the itinerants themselves, it had its justification, and indicated the greatness of their virtues. It showed that its authors were without selfish designs, and were wholly interested in their chief work, the saving of souls. At worst, it was the use of one extreme measure to correct another. In those days, the ministry of the existing sects usually entered the sacred office as men engage in any worldly calling, — professionally, and for a living. The itinerant said, "I preach, because 'woe is me if I

preach not the gospel:'" they made the terms of service a matter of bargain, and the best that they could. He said, "My solicitude is for your souls, and not for your purses:" they were paid by a tax upon the people, generally odious. He said, "My support shall be the offerings of love, and voluntary." If he erred at all, it was in his indifference to temporal things, that his spiritual work might be paramount, and that he might be placed beyond the suspicion of covetousness. He would cheerfully bear all the privations of his course, that the words of his message might be received without prejudice or impediment.

The poverty that resulted from their policy was a severe strain on the self-denying spirit of the itinerants. The rigidest economy could hardly "keep the wolf from their doors." The families of the married ones were often in extreme want. While the husband and father was seeking the scattered sheep upon the mountains, and leading them "into green pastures and beside the still waters," his wife and children were not unfrequently driven to the poorest and scantiest subsistence. He was often compelled to limit his own fare, and go meanly clad, in order to eke out a little more for their comfort. Such a state of things could only have a damaging effect on his own spirits. Nothing but an impulsion from the Divine Spirit, seemingly irresistible, that compelled him to preach the word, could have kept any of these men submissively and cheerfully in such a life of destitution.

The poor provision for the support of the ministers induced many of them to remain unmarried. It produced a sentiment, both among preachers and people, that encouraged clerical celibacy. There was another

cause, too, that partly encouraged this sentiment. It was the teaching and practice of the first three bishops, Asbury, Whatcoat, and McKendree. Neither of them was married. Asbury, whose influence was the greatest, was especially unfavorable to the preachers marrying. He lived a single life for conscience' sake; and, by his word and practice, he impressed for a time his conscientious convictions on many of his brethren. Whether he had any misgivings for his course in after life we cannot say. Among other reasons he then assigned for so doing, he said, "I could hardly expect to find a woman with grace enough to live but one week out of fifty-two with her husband. If I have done wrong, I hope God and the sex will forgive me."

The chief cause, however, why so large a number of the preachers remained so long unmarried was the financial impossibility of providing for a family. Nevertheless, many of them did ultimately marry. A large proportion of these, after contending for a while with the perplexities of poverty and suffering, were compelled, unwillingly, to locate in order to provide for their households. They yielded to the necessity as a courageous soldier submits to be taken from the battle-field when his wounds have disabled him for the fight. If the specific cause had been added why so many had the word "located" appended to their names in the "Minutes," it would have been *because of poverty*. But for the large number of unmarried men who joined the itinerant ranks, this cause would have soon left the sheep with only here and there a shepherd.

Though the severe financial *régime* adopted in the beginning bore so hard on the ministry, and drove many able men from the itinerancy, it had its advantages. It

worked an entire change in the economy of ministerial support in all the churches of the country, and proved the superiority of the voluntary principle to all systems of ecclesiastical taxation. Time and education naturally corrected any defective notions of the Methodist people in respect to their obligations to maintain their ministers. Enlightened views of duty, regularity of system, and increasing means, have introduced a more liberal policy, and there is now no class of ministers in the land more equitably and generously supported than those of the Methodist Church.

CHAPTER XV.

REPRESENTATIVE MEN OF THE FIRST QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF EPISCOPAL METHODISM. — A GROUP PICTURE.

"Honor to whom honor."

FOR variety, let us turn from the work to some of the individual workmen; from Methodism organizing, spreading, and demonstrative, to some of the leading men that determined its polity, and were the chief agents in its diffusion. The natural order is to estimate men by their work. "By their fruits ye shall know them." We must form our opinions of the characteristics of the founders of Methodism chiefly from Methodism itself. Still, men have qualities independently of results: or, rather, they have qualities that lead us to expect from them corresponding results. We devote this chapter to a few pen-and-ink portraits of some of the representative men of Methodism towards the close of the last and at the beginning of the present century.

They were "representative" men in many ways. They were true types of the itinerant ministry in the thoroughness and spirituality of their religious experience; in their entire consecration to the work of saving men; in laborious service and self-denial; in persecutions and perils; in direct and earnest preaching;

in success in winning souls; and, after years of toil in the Master's vineyard, in their triumphant Christian deaths.

We have selected those of whom we write, chiefly because they were prominent among their brethren, are now more generally known in the denomination than most of their compeers, and because they probably were most influential in their day in giving its peculiar character and form to Methodism generally, and in the different sections of the country particularly.

Some one has said that "men are made to fit the niche they were designed to fill." We rather think that they make the niche to fit themselves, and that the early itinerants, by divine help, moulded Methodism to their own dimensions. Wesley's views of order and system constructed his whole evangelical polity. Asbury's devotion to an itinerancy, gave to Methodism a devoted attachment to that method of ministerial labor, and increased the conviction of his disciples that the larger the circuit the more orthodox was the work, and the more apostolic were the workmen; the junior preachers, in a measure, took the type of their seniors; and the people took their impress from the preachers. It was not a servile, but a voluntary conformation from an appreciation of the originals. The converts of Benjamin Abbott were firm believers in a spiritual and divine agency to prostrate men, and to make them helpless, while hearing the Word. The style, habits, and opinions of Methodism were formed very much after the pattern of its leading men. It was well that they had such good models.

Still, there can be no doubt that the spirit and polity of Methodism greatly aided to make its leaders what

they were. Its full, assuring religious experience; its eminently practical doctrines; its itinerancy; and not least its disciplinary labor, — all conspired to develop and to fashion these men into such noble proportions.

Yet each of them possessed, what is found in all truly great minds, an originality peculiar to himself. Whoever studies the traits that distinguished them will find a pleasant "diversity of gifts, but the same spirit." How unlike in manner were Coke and Asbury! What contrasts were seen in the pulpit address of McKendree and Hedding, or of Abbott and Garrettson! Yet each of them was great after his own order. And though they were, like Peter and John, very diverse in gifts, like them also they were most intimate in fellowship, and hearty co-laborers in the same field. They adopted the motto, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty."

It is not difficult to account for this diversity among Methodist itinerants. They had no common teacher to train them in the same mannerisms and tones that are usually found from the drill of one master on disciples of the same school. They went out from the various avocations of life in which the call to the ministry found them, and were expected to "learn their trade" as they wrought at it. They had but little opportunity by association to become imitators of each other. They met once a year at Conference, or perhaps occasionally at a quarterly meeting. They were cast on their own resources, and had to adopt an address or an administration suggested by their own genius. They cultivated new fields, that furnished no precedents as a guide, and that required all their "grace and gifts," and called into exercise all their inventive powers, to make their preach-

ing most successful. Hence, each one of them grew into his work with individual characteristics, without being a mere imitator of others. If they came, like David, from a pastoral life, and knew best how to use the sling, they found it their best weapon, and "chose the smooth stones from the brook" rather than to cumber themselves with Saul's armor.

The greatness of these men consisted, in part, in their versatility, and their facility to adapt themselves and their ministrations to the circumstances in which they were placed. They knew how to "become all things to all men that they might save some." They were not mere perfunctory ministers, with a stiff habit and a machine service. They were as expert in responding wisely to the captious disputatiousness of a New-Enggland inquisitor as in suiting their direct exhortations to an assemblage of rude pioneers in a Western log-cabin. They were as much at ease addressing an irregular crowd in the market-place, as an orderly and fastidious congregation in church. They could denounce wickedness with the terrible penalties of the law, and pass at once into the class-room, and hold fellowship with, and give counsel to, an earnest company of believers seeking for perfect love; or instruct with a sympathizing heart the almost despairing penitent inquiring "what he must do to be saved." They were never embarrassed from the novelty or difficulty of their situation.

With all their diversity of gifts, and their independence and genius to improve every variety of circumstance in doing good, there were some things in which these early itinerants were strikingly alike. They held to the essential importance of a devotedly religious life, and personal holiness was their first pursuit; they were

strict in conforming to the same ecclesiastical regulations and discipline, — sometimes very severe on themselves, — for purposes of co-operation and greater efficiency; they persistently preached the same doctrines; they had but one work, and devoted themselves exclusively to it; they breathed but one spirit and had but one motive; it was their ambition and their glorying that they "saved souls," and spread "scriptural holiness over the land."

But that which characterized every itinerant in the great Methodistic movement, and perhaps more than every thing else conspired to make him great, was, that he felt that he was called and directed in his work by God; that his impulsion to preach was a *real inspiration* from above. To one who denies the supernatural, and refers all phenomena in human history to natural causes, the belief in a divine power attending the ministry will appear only a speculation; but to Methodist ministers it was a truth that their faith readily embraced, and was to them a perpetual guarantee of their success. They believed that the inward moving of the Holy Ghost to preach the word was something more than a common divine supervision of their calling, or that preaching was simply a profession that God approved. They believed that it was a divine *afflatus*, revealing truth to the mind, and moving the heart of its subjects to feel it, and impelling them with a spiritual power to declare it; that it was the same inspiration that moved Nathan to preach to David, and that directed Philip to preach to the Ethiopian, and that stirred Paul's spirit within him to preach to the Athenians. They felt, too, that it was an inspiration that must not be repressed. It nerved them to defy dangers and difficulties, and

would only allow them to rest when they had fulfilled its commands. This inspiration, while it gave them the grandest conception of their mission, and moved them to seek the best preparation to obey it, was a direct aid to their powers, and helped to make them the truly great men that they were, in capacity as well as in purpose.

If we were to make a group-picture of the ruling minds in American Methodism during its first half century, we should give to Asbury the place of honor, — the centre of the group. His spirit and his views were impressed upon the whole church, both lay and clerical. To him, more than to any other man, is Methodism indebted for its polity and its success. His episcopal office gave him great authority, and his fidelity in its duties inspired implicit confidence in his administration; but not more than his personal qualities made him the object of esteem and love of the people. To give a full description of him and his labors would fill this volume. The best and most comprehensive portrait of him that we have ever seen is from the pen of Rev. Joshua Marsden.

"Bishop Asbury was one of those very few men whom nature forms in no ordinary mould. His mind was stamped with a certain greatness and originality which lifted him far above the merely learned man, and fitted him to be great without science, and venerable without titles. His knowledge of men was profound and penetrating; hence he looked into character as one looks into a clear stream in order to discover the bottom; yet he did not use this penetration to compass any unworthy purposes: the policy of knowing men in order to make the most of them was a littleness to which he

never stooped. He had only one end in view, and that was worthy the dignity of an angel: from this nothing ever warped him aside. He seemed conscious that God had designed him for a great work, and nothing was wanting on his part to fulfil the intention of Providence. The niche was cut in the great temple of usefulness, and he stretched himself to fill it up in all its dimensions. To him the widest career of labor and duty presented no obstacle. Like a moral Cæsar, he thought nothing done while any thing remained to do. His penetrating eye measured the ground over which he intended to sow the seeds of eternal life, while his courageous and active mind cheerfully embraced all the difficulties engrafted upon his labors. He worshipped no god of the name of *Terminus*, but stretched 'his line of things' far beyond the bounds of ordinary minds.

"An annual journey of six thousand miles through a wilderness would have sunk a feebler mind into despondency; but nothing retarded his progress, or once moved him from the line of duty. He pursued the most difficult and laborious course as most men do their pleasures; and although for many years he was enfeebled by sickness, and worn with age and infirmity, two hundred thousand persons saw with astonishment the hoary veteran 'still standing in his lot,' or 'pressing his vast line of duty' with undiminished zeal.

"The Methodist connection in united America gloried in having such a man to preside at their head; and few of the preachers ever spoke of his integrity, diligence, and zeal, without imputing to themselves some worth in having him as their bishop. To all that bore the appearance of polished and pleasing life he was dead; and both from habit and divine grace had acquired such a

true greatness of mind, that he seemed to estimate nothing as excellent but what tended to the glory of God. Flattery, to which many great minds are susceptible, found him fortified behind a double guard of humility; and opposition but served to awaken those energies of mind which rise with difficulties and surmount the greatest. He knew nothing about pleasing the flesh at the expense of duty: flesh and blood were enemies with whom he never took counsel. He took a high standing upon the rugged Alps of labor; and, to all that lagged behind, he said, 'Come up hither.' He was a rigid enemy to ease: hence the pleasures of study and the charms of recreation he alike sacrificed to the more sublime work of saving souls. His faith was a 'constant evidence of things not seen,' for he lived as a man totally blind to all worldly attractions. It is true that his self-denial savored of austerity, and yet he could sympathize with another's weakness.

"Some great and good men have had their sportive moments, and, without committing 'half a sin,' have both smiled themselves, and been amused with others; but, although I have been in his company upon a variety of occasions, I never saw him indulge in even innocent pleasantry His was the solemnity of an apostle: it was so interwoven with his conduct that he could not put off the gravity of the bishop, either in the parlor or dining-room. What, on account of levity, was once said of a popular preacher, that he should either never go in, or never come out of, a pulpit, could never be applied to him. Wisdom is not more distant from folly than his conduct was from any thing akin to trifling.

"He had stated hours of retirement and prayer, upon which he let neither business nor company break in.

Prayer was the seasoning of all his avocations: he never suffered the cloth to be removed from the table until he had kneeled down to address the Almighty. It was the preface to all business, and often the link that connected opposite duties, and the conclusion of whatever he took in hand. Divine wisdom seemed to direct all his undertakings, for he sought its counsels upon all occasions. No part of his conduct was the result of accident. The plan by which he transacted all his affairs was as regular as the movements of a time-piece: hence he had no idle moments, no fragments of time broken and scattered up and down; no cause to say with Titus, 'My friends, I have lost a day.' Pleading with God in secret, settling the various affairs of the body over which he presided, or speaking 'to men for their edification' in the pulpit, occupied all his time.

"As a preacher, although not an orator, he was dignified, eloquent, and impressive: his sermons were the result of good sense and sound wisdom, delivered with great authority and gravity, and often attended with divine unction, which made them as refreshing as the dew of heaven.

"His chief excellence, however, lay in governing. For this, perhaps, no man was better qualified. He presided, with dignity, moderation, and firmness, over a large body of men, all of whom were as tenacious of liberty and equal rights as most men in the world; and yet each submitted to an authority that grew out of his labors, — an authority founded upon reason, maintained with inflexible integrity, and exercised only for the good of the whole. A man of less energy would have given up the reins; and one of less prudence, wisdom, and moderation would have committed the same error as

Phæton, and the whole system would have been confused and distracted: but Mr. Asbury managed the vast economy with singular ability; his eye was keen, his hand was steady, and his 'moderation was known to all men.'

"In his appearance he was the picture of plainness and simplicity, bordering on the costume of the Friends. The reader may figure to himself an old man, spare and tall, but remarkably clean; with plain frock coat, drab or mixture; waistcoat and small-clothes of the same kind; a neat stock; a large, broad-brimmed hat, with an uncommonly low crown; while his white locks, venerable with age, added to his appearance a simplicity it is not easy to describe. His countenance had a cast of severity; but this was probably owing to his habitual gravity and seriousness. His look was remarkably penetrating: in a word, I never recollect to have seen a man of more grave, venerable, and dignified appearance."

Every important feature of American Methodism, when Asbury died, was either the product of his invention, or had received the aid of his co-operation. He was "shoulders and upwards" above all his brethren, in directing the movements of the infant societies during the brief period of their colonial connection with the English body. Though Wesley prepared the model, Asbury's was the chief mind, in influence and counsel, in organizing the Methodist-Episcopal Church. By his advice and supervision, the complete system of the Annual and Quarterly Conferences was reared. He labored diligently to create a fund for the relief and support of the superannuated preachers and their families. He was prominent in founding the Book Concern. His hand was vigorously employed in designing and working out the crowning feature of the church, a

delegated General Conference. He did not live to take part in the creation of a distinct missionary society; but his whole itinerant life was given to the superintendence of the grandest scheme of evangelical propagandism that was ever instituted. Though a stern advocate for the "good old paths," he had withal a remarkable elasticity and progressiveness, that disposed him to favor every consistent plan proposed for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Of his labors, who can tell the sum? His presence in every part of the church seemed to be almost ubiquitous. The honored title of Washington as "Father of his Country" might be so modified as to apply to him, as the "Father of American Methodism." No man ever lived who did more hard service, and travelled more, and made greater sacrifices, and left a nobler record of usefulness, in forty-five years' labor, than Francis Asbury.

In our group-picture, we give a conspicuous place to Freeborn Garrettson, to whom Methodism is largely indebted for its early successes, especially in the northern division of the country. He entered the list of itinerants, and continued a prominent man in its ranks for more than fifty years. His conversion, like that of most of his associates, was very clear and assuring. A few years after he began to travel, while in North Carolina, he received the full baptism of the Spirit, which he called "perfect love." This experience, that exhibited itself with all its grace in his administrations, he retained and professed during the remainder of his life. If any of his many excellent traits of character was a more decidedly ruling one in his life than another, it was his conscientiousness. He showed

how strongly this principle ruled him, and was equivalent to the highest authority, in manumitting all his slaves soon after his conversion. These he had inherited from his deceased father. He thus describes his manner in this work of manumission: "I called the family together for prayer. As I stood with a book in my hand, in the act of giving out a hymn, this thought powerfully struck my mind, 'It is not right for you to keep your fellow-creatures in bondage: you must let the oppressed go free.' Till then I had never suspected that the practice of slavekeeping was wrong: I had never read a book on the subject, nor been told so by any. I paused a minute, and then replied, 'Lord, the oppressed shall go free;' and I was as clear of them in my mind as if I had never owned one. I told them they did not belong to me, and that I did not desire their services without making them a compensation. I was now at liberty to proceed in worship." Of such material, so true to obey the convictions of duty, were those early itinerants made.

For seven years after he united with Conference, and through the trials of Methodism in the Revolution, Garrettson aided not less than any other man, except Asbury, to give character and success to the denomination from New Jersey to South Carolina; and at the Christmas Conference, in 1784, he volunteered as a missionary to Nova Scotia, — the first foreign missionary of American Methodism. We have given an account, in a preceding chapter, of his labors, sufferings, and successes in that colony. Probably no American itinerant was more than he the victim of numerous personal attacks because of his faithful preaching of the word; and none was ever more courageous and steadfast in follow-

ing his convictions of duty. Writing to Wesley during his missionary service in Nova Scotia, he said, "My lot has mostly been cast in new places to form circuits, which much exposed me to persecution. Once I was imprisoned; twice beaten, left on the highway speechless and senseless; once shot at; guns and pistols presented at my breast; once delivered from an armed mob at the dead time of night, on the highway, by a surprising flash of lightning; surrounded frequently by mobs; stoned frequently; I have had to escape for my life at dead time of night. Oh! shall I ever forget the divine hand which has supported me?"

Though his labors extended from the northern to the southern portions of the country, and he was a ruling spirit in giving the forming character to American Methodism generally, he was especially the founder of the sect in the region extending northward from New-York city into the Canadas, and continued its leading representative man in that region for over thirty years. Dr. Stevens says of him, "Few men, none perhaps except Asbury and Lee, labored more indefatigably, or made greater sacrifices, for Methodism than Freeborn Garrettson. He fought its early and formidable battles from South Carolina to Nova Scotia, and never with defeat; his spirit glowed with an inextinguishable zeal; and the privations, travels, and fatigue of more than fifty years spent in the itinerant ministry, only augmented his devotion to the propagation of those great doctrines of the cross which Methodism had brought home to his own experience."

The late Dr. Nathan Bangs was Garrettson's intimate friend. No man knew him better, or could more truthfully or better portray his character. He says of him,

"One of the first things that would strike you, in the character of Mr. Garrettson, was his remarkable Christian simplicity. You saw that he was a man of highly respectable powers of intellect, improved by considerable reading, as well as extensive intercourse with the world; but you lost sight, in a great degree, of all this, in the perfectly inartificial air that characterized all his utterances and all his doings. You felt, when you were in his company, that you were certainly in contact with a true man, one who was utterly incapable of saying or doing any thing that could, by any possibility, mislead or betray; one to whom you could unbosom yourself with a confidence that should know no limit. As he was incapable of guile, so he was also a stranger to suspicion. He never would credit an evil report concerning another, without evidence that was irresistible; and, even when he was obliged to do this, his eminently forbearing spirit always predisposed him to find, if possible, some palliation for the alleged delinquency.

"But this ingenuous and kind disposition was never suffered to interfere in the least with his convictions of duty, — with the fixed, commanding purpose of his life to approve himself in all things unto God. It was this ruling passion of his life that made him one of the most diligent, courageous, and self-denying men whom I have ever known. Where other men suspended their labors, he kept busily at his work. Where others remained in retirement, from a conviction that any other course would be perilous, if not fatal, he made it as clear as the light that he counted not his life dear unto him. It was enough for him to be satisfied that he was in the path of duty; and whatever obstacles he encountered, he felt prepared, in the strength of God's grace, to meet

them. During the war of the Revolution, his conscience would not suffer him to take the oath of allegiance on the one hand, or voluntarily to yield to the power that would stop him from preaching the gospel on the other; and hence he was beset with manifold trials on every side, under which nothing but an implicit confidence in the providence of God would have sustained him. It was his conviction that he was acting in obedience to the divine will, that enabled him to labor with such untiring diligence against such mighty opposition; to look danger, and even death, in the face, without so much as the first symptom of faltering.

"Mr. Garrettson's whole career was marked by an eminently disinterested spirit, so far as respects any pecuniary reward for his labors. During the whole course of his ministry, extending through a period of upwards of fifty years, he received no pecuniary recompense, except in a few instances, when it was urged upon him; and then it was either given to necessitous individuals, or deposited with the funds of the Conference. He cheerfully expended his whole patrimony in sustaining himself in the work in which he was called. And after he came into possession of a larger estate by his marriage, I have heard him say that the entire income of his property, after meeting annual expenses, was devoted to objects of benevolence. He never forgot that he was a steward of the divine bounty, that his property was given to him for a higher purpose than to be devoted to any of the forms of self-indulgence.

"In another sense, Mr. Garrettson was also one of the most liberal of men. I mean in the affectionate regard which he bore for Christians of other communions than his own. Though he was sincerely and

strongly attached to all the distinctive principles of Methodism, and was ready to defend them when occasion required, yet he could hold cordial fellowship with all who he believed loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Hence his house was the resort of Christians and ministers of different communions; and, on such occasions, they mutually left out of view their distinctive peculiarities, and met on the common ground of evangelical Christianity. As illustrative of this trait of character, I may mention a circumstance that took place in connection with a visit that he made to Providence, R.I. A member of the church under the care of the Rev. Mr. Snow, an orthodox Congregational minister, expressed some anxiety to know whether Mr. Garrettson intended to establish a Methodist church in that town. Mr. Garrettson's reply was to this effect, — 'Be assured, sir, if I do, I shall not admit you.' — 'Why not?' said the person addressed: 'have you heard any thing to my disparagement?' — 'No, sir,' said Mr. Garrettson: 'I have heard nothing that would not entitle you to an honorable standing in any church; but you are already under an evangelical spiritual ministry. I would rather add to, than take from, Mr. Snow's church; and, were I to raise a church in this place, the members would be gathered from among those who are not favored with such a ministry, or those who would not avail themselves of the privilege.'"

Garrettson lived to see Methodism diffused over all the nation, and when he died, in 1827, had the satisfaction of knowing that he had acted an efficient part in its diffusion. His last words were the Christian victor's testimony, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory!"

Jesse Lee is entitled to a prominent place in our pen-and-ink group of the men who distinguished themselves as planting or rearing Methodism in some particular sections of the country. His distinctive honor is, that he established the denomination in New England. His entrance into the ministry, in 1782, five years after his conversion, was characteristic of the spirit that often affected many others who entered it in that early day,— a spirit of fear lest he should injure rather than aid the cause he desired to promote. So strong was this fear that he hesitated for two years to give his name to the Conference, and gave it then with great solicitude in respect to his success. But, having put his hand to the plough, he never looked back: in this he was also a representative of his brethren in the ministry. With diffidence and trembling they began the work, literally "thrust out;" but heroically, with confidence and persistence, they persevered in their ministerial service, itinerant or local, to the end of their lives. In the great work of his life,— founding Methodism in the land of the Pilgrims,— Lee showed a quality of mind that is always the mark of a truly great man,— a genius to conceive a great enterprise, and a power to apply all the energies of his heart and will to execute it. This he did in giving Methodism to the Eastern States. For five years before he commenced it, New England was ever present to him as the field, white to the harvest, that he ought to enter; and then he came there, all the way from a Southern State, to begin the work as its pioneer missionary. After a single decade he saw Methodism spread throughout the Eastern States, as the result of his noble undertaking. Nothing less than this would have satisfied him. Every true ecclesiastical historian of New

England will give Jesse Lee an important and honored place in his narrative.

After these ten years of successful labor, he returned to his native region, in Virginia, with a reputation and influence in the church inferior to none but Asbury himself, and a prominent candidate for the episcopal office. Incidental reasons prevented his election; but Asbury had such confidence in his judgment that he requested and obtained his assistance in the duties of the superintendency. He was generally popular, and was elected chaplain to Congress for five years. He was the first historian of Methodism, and has preserved from oblivion many valuable facts in its history. The characteristics of such a man cannot fail to be interesting.

Dr. Laban Clark has given the following sketch of him: "His countenance was marked by a high degree of intelligence, and always wore a genial smile, that betokened a fountain of kindly feeling within. He had great energy of mind and purpose, as well as a deep insight into the springs of human action; and thus he was eminently qualified, not only to originate, but to carry into execution, arduous and lofty enterprises. No one, not possessed of a mind of much more than ordinary force, could have accomplished what he did in the early introduction of Methodism into New England.

"Jesse Lee was a man of remarkable power in the pulpit. I never heard a man speak in public who spoke with less apparent effort than he did. He had a prodigiously powerful voice; and sometimes, without seeming to exert himself at all, he would pour forth a volume of sound which would well-nigh make the whole house jar. His preaching was in a very familiar style; but

it was pithy, pungent, and sometimes exceedingly striking. The first time I heard him preach, which was in my native place, he took for his text the following passage from the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." In speaking of the "pit of corruption," I remember an allusion, significant at once of his own religious views and of the peculiar character of his mind, that he made to the sinner's death in trespasses and sins. "Yes," said he, "the sinner is dead; but how dead? Dead as a stone? Not quite. But as dead as an egg,—in respect to which you have only to use the proper means to produce a chick." I once heard him preach from the text, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and he introduced his subject by remarking that these eleven words he would distinguish under six distinct heads. He seemed fond of surprising his audience by things that they did not expect, or which were in themselves peculiarly striking; thinking, no doubt, that such things were more easily lodged in the memory.

"Jesse Lee was a man of excellent humor; and he sometimes indulged it, much to the amusement of his friends. I recall one instance of it that occurred in Conference. The question before the body was upon rescinding or modifying the rule, then existing in our church, that forbade the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. Ezekiel Cooper and Jesse Lee, who were both bachelors, were present, and took part in the discussion. Cooper was against the rule as it stood, on the ground that it imposed Romish celibacy; for, as there were so many more pious women than men in the

world, and three women to two men even in the Methodist Church, it was obvious that the females must either be forced to celibacy, or be excluded from the church. "And what," said he, "shall the poor things do?" Lee replied to his bachelor brother, that his argument would have had much more weight with him, if it had emanated from a different source. "He cries out," said he, "'Poor things! what will they do?' when he will not lift his finger to help them."

Out of a number of eminent men in the ministry of Methodism in the Middle Conferences, we select for our group Ezekiel Cooper. Like all the itinerants of his day, he had but little reputation as a writer; but, as a preacher and as a debater, he had few if any superiors. His sound judgment in all matters that appertained to the economy of Methodism, and his clearness and perspicuity in argument, gave him an influence almost unrivalled in determining the future polity of the church. From his entrance into the ministry in 1784, to 1847, when he died, the oldest Methodist itinerant in England or America, he acted a leading part in effecting the changes that matured and strengthened the economy of Methodism in the United States.

The late Dr. Kenneday, who says he "was intimately acquainted with Mr. Cooper for twenty-five years," says that he "possessed a mind of uncommon vigor and versatility; and, being always a diligent student, he became in no small degree distinguished for his attainments. He reasoned with great clearness and discrimination, and never left his hearer in doubt as to the meaning, and rarely as to the conclusiveness, of his argument. He had withal a fine imagination, that brought to the illustration of his subject an exuberance of beautiful

and sometimes magnificent imagery. His language, though rich and glowing, was simple; while his appeals to the conscience were uttered with a subduing, almost irresistible, pathos. I have sometimes heard him at meetings in the forest, when an audience of ten thousand have been so enchained by his discourse that the most perfect silence and solemnity have reigned through the whole service. The proudest infidel heard him with awe, and was sometimes abased; while, under the same exhibition of truth, the brother of low degree was made to rejoice that he was exalted." Speaking of Mr. Cooper's powers in debate, Dr. Kenneday says, "He was almost unequalled;" and "the preachers in Conference used to call him *Lycurgus*, in reference to his profound wisdom."

Thus it was that, while Methodism was engaged in vigorous efforts for church-extension, and pioneer men were raised up to "lengthen its cords," others, like Ezekiel Cooper, of sound wisdom and legislative ability, and equally necessary to the prosperity and permanence of the church, were qualified to give to it a consistent and efficient polity, and to "strengthen its stakes."

There were a number of active and honorable itinerant workmen, co-laborers in introducing Methodism into the South: no one of them, however, was so prominent among his brethren as to justify us in giving him a distinctive sketch. John Easter was a "son of thunder," and "had power with God and with men." Enoch George, afterwards a bishop, preached in North and South Carolina a few years with great success. Hope Hull was, perhaps, as gifted and influential a Methodist preacher, and as much respected and loved, as any other that labored in the South towards the close of the last and at the beginning of the present century. George

Dougherty was another of the promising itinerants, and was much loved, for the few years — only eight — that he lived in the service. There were many such men in Southern Methodism at that period of its history.

We complete our group-picture with a notice of William McKendree. Though not strictly the founder, he was the most efficient organizer, of Methodism in the West. There were many others who preceded him, and in a literal sense were his pioneers. He gave system to their labors, and, by his supervision and talents, gave increased vigor to Methodism beyond the Alleghanies. They were a noble and courageous class of men who introduced Methodism in the West; and those who came after them, and entered into their labors, whatever their gifts or services, can detract nothing from the merited honors of William Burke, Francis Poythress, Barnabas McHenry, John Kobler, Benjamin Lakin, and a few others who entered the wilderness with the emigrants, and organized classes, and marked out their circuits in the midst of perils from the Indians, and with labors that would have crushed any but the most hardy and indomitable spirits.

William McKendree was just the man that Methodism needed in the West at the time when Asbury transferred him from the East, and appointed him a presiding elder in Kentucky, in 1800. The ten vigorous young itinerants that were already there were zealous, self-denying, and devoted men; but they wanted a leader of his comprehensive views of the great work before them to develop the grandness of their enterprise; a man of his executive ability to give system and co-operation to their labors; and one of his commanding gifts and influence as a preacher, to be to them a model

for imitation. He immediately took a leading position among them, and became the chief founder of Methodism in the West. For the next eight years, during which he led the way, and helped to introduce Methodism across the Ohio into the North-west Territory, and gave consistent form and strength to it in Tennessee, he was recognized as a master spirit among the itinerants through all those regions. In 1808, he was elected bishop. Though comparatively a stranger to the members of that General Conference from the Eastern and Middle States, he was so highly esteemed by his brethren from the West that they unanimously presented him as their candidate for the episcopal office. A single sermon, preached by him at that Conference, — of which Bishop Asbury said, "That sermon will make him a bishop," — convinced its members that he was the man they ought to elect; and he was elected by a large majority.

McKendree's gifts for his episcopal duties were such as justified his election. He was a man of good judgment, and thoroughly understood the Methodist economy. He was a dignified and agreeable presiding officer, and his executive talents enabled him to give to the Annual Conference an improved regularity and order in their business proceedings. To the time of his election, an Annual Conference had been conducted without those established rules that are so essential to a proper and prompt despatch of business: they were more like social and domestic conversations, with Asbury as a father at the head. McKendree prepared, and introduced into them, rules for their government that very soon made an Annual Conference what it now is, a deliberative body.

It was McKendree's talent as a preacher, united with his zealous evangelical spirit, that made him so eminently the apostle of Methodism in the West. He was a fine representative of the gifts of the Methodist pulpit of his times. Too little credit has been awarded to the Christian oratory of the itinerants; and the enemies of Methodism have often attributed to them only a gift for declamation or for rant. A greater scandal could not be uttered. There might have been, occasionally, one of their number who, from ignorance, or excess of zeal, was wanting in the endowments of true eloquence; but, as a class, Methodist ministers have been foremost of the American denominations as popular preachers. Every thing conspired to make them so: their themes furnished them with topics calculated to inspire them, and that appealed to every emotion and passion, and that addressed the heart and conscience. They were men who studied all the experiences of human nature, and how to apply the truth practically to their audiences; they were versed, without rivals, in the knowledge of the Scriptures, and made their appeals from the authority of God's word; there was a directness and purpose in their preaching that gave a personal interest to their hearers in what they heard. Methodist preachers were natural and cultivated orators, — natural in that they were not bound by any forms and mannerisms which would have destroyed their freedom; cultivated in that they studied the proprieties, and how to make the truth most transparent and affecting. Their greatest endowment, of all others, was that they spoke with an assurance and a love of the truth that directed their words with a zeal and a power that impressed their hearers with the conviction that they "spoke what they knew,

and testified to what they had seen." Dr. Tefft says, "Their style and manner, including their extemporaneous method, have so taken possession of the public mind, that all classes of public speakers, excepting only the clergy of some small religious bodies, have been compelled, by the pressure of the general taste, to follow their example." We may add, that in the late attempt to do away with preaching, and to adopt only a ritualistic public service, the movement has only been made by those "small religious bodies" that have persistently refused to adopt the earnest, effective, and popular style of Methodist preachers.

We have said that McKendree was a fine representative in the preaching gifts of the itinerants. About the time that he was appointed to Kentucky, camp-meetings, that have had a peculiar relation to the progress of Methodism in this country, were the great popular religious gatherings in that region. He availed himself of the opportunity they afforded him to preach the truth with extraordinary success; and probably no man ever had greater power than he had to affect by his masterly eloquence the vast audiences that assembled at these meetings. His character as a preacher is well described by his old and intimate friend, the late Hon. John McLean, Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. He says, "I never saw a more dignified man in the pulpit than Bishop McKendree. Nature had formed him in her finest mould. His high and well-developed forehead, his prominent and piercing eye, the beautiful proportions of his face, his benign and intelligent expression, the blandness of his manner, and the symmetry of his form, presented one of the most imposing figures that ever occupied the sacred desk.

"He was in the highest sense an eloquent man. With great simplicity and grace of delivery, he united a force and beauty of illustration that approached nearer the Sermon on the Mount than any I ever heard from any one else. A child could understand him; and, at the same time, he commanded the profoundest attention of the learned. What he said was always so appropriate to his subject, and was uttered with so much ease and grace, that every hearer was ready to conclude that he could himself say the same thing. And yet no one could imitate his manner,—could imitate the persuasiveness and beautiful simplicity with which he set forth the truths of the gospel.

"When roused by his subject, his mind expanded, and seemed to possess an inspiration almost without limit. His metaphors, when he indulged in them, were always chaste; but they came in their divinest forms at his bidding. Heaven and earth and hell were the instruments of his eloquence. On one occasion, when preaching to many thousands at a camp-meeting in Ohio, he was describing the miseries of the lost,—a strain in which he seldom indulged. But so appalling was his description, that the congregation involuntarily rose from their seats, with eyes fixed upon the preacher, and with a ghastly paleness of countenance that betokened absolute consternation. Observing the overwhelming effect, he paused for a moment, and then, in a loud but soothing tone of voice, thanked God that his hearers were not in the world of woe; and a shout instantly went up from the multitude, which must have been heard at a great distance. It was the involuntary shout of deliverance."

With such men as these, whose gifts, character, and

position we have only imperfectly described, — Garrettson in the North; Lee in the East; Cooper in the Centre; Hull and Easter in the South; McKendree in the West; and the ubiquitous Asbury North, South, East, and West, — leading on and directing the movements of Methodism in its early developments in this country, no one should be surprised at the success that attended them and their co-laborers; and that American Methodism found a good root, and spread out luxuriantly, and bore its fruit, "thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold."

CHAPTER XVI.

EPISCOPAL METHODISM IN THE LAST HALF CENTURY.

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given."

NEARLY all the organic features of American Methodism were incorporated into it before the close of the first half century of its history; since then but few radical changes have been made. The legislation of the church has sought rather to modify, to guard, and to perfect what had been introduced than to essentially alter its fundamental structure. At the close of that period, Methodism had become a thoroughly arranged, mutually dependent, and mutually supporting and efficient system, each part contributing to sustain every other part; and neither could say to the other, "I have no need of thee." From its social and domestic weekly class-meeting, encouraging and aiding its members in a spiritual life, up to the highest legislative and judicial assembly, the quadrennial General Conference, supervising the interests of the whole church; from the class-leader, as a lay-pastor, with a dozen or more under his spiritual watch-care, to the exhorter and local preacher, to the circuit or stationed preacher, and to the presiding elder up to the bishop, the general itinerant and executive officer of the entire church,— the

whole economy of Methodism had become a harmonious, well-arranged, and well-balanced ecclesiastical polity, and actively working in "spreading scriptural holiness over the land."

During the last fifty years, Methodism has been chiefly devoted, in addition to its great work of preaching Christ, to preserve the integrity of its system, to develop and mature its powers, and to introduce such collateral agencies as would cultivate its evangelical spirit, and increase and strengthen its social, educational, and financial position and usefulness.

The creation of a *delegated* General Conference, the the first of which assembled in New York in 1812, was the last great change in the ecclesiastical polity of Methodism. Until then, this highest judicatory of the church had been composed of all the elders in the several Annual Conferences. The rapid increase in the ministry had made the General Conference an unwieldily deliberative body: the extended domain over which its members were spread made it impossible for a considerable number of them to attend it from the remoter parts of the country. Besides the great expense to those who did attend, it involved a material injury to the societies, who would be left without pastoral care in the absence of so many preachers for several successive weeks.

In adopting the representative principle, in which each Annual Conference would have its delegates, *pro rata* to the number of its members, the various parts of the church would have an equal voice in its deliberations, and the law-making body would then be most likely to be composed of the ablest and most experienced men of the church. Furthermore, it was the

adoption of a policy consistent with the mind and institutions of the American people. The General Conference of 1808, that provided for its future sessions by representation, and at the same time established restrictive regulations prohibiting the newly constituted Conference from removing the essential landmarks of Methodism, showed a sagacity that has been rightly called "true ecclesiastical statesmanship;" exhibiting the spirit of progress demanded by the exigences of the times, steadied by a healthy and wise conservatism.

In tracing the history of Methodism during this later period which we are now considering, we naturally inquire whether the revivals continued which had imparted to it such life and growth during the earlier. This is an important question; for its answer will determine whether Methodism has preserved its spiritual vigor, and continued to exhibit its original evidence that it is of God. Nor must it be taken for granted that an affirmative answer will be given. By referring to other times, we shall find that in many instances revivals have continued only for limited periods, and that the greatest in this country previous to the introduction of Methodism, known as the "great awakening," in the days of Edwards, lasted only for a few years, and left the churches and ministry of New England, where it chiefly prevailed, in a degenerate and deplorable religious state. The revivals in Methodism have not been followed by such results. They were not a specialty, designed to arouse the attention of the people to a new sect, and for a limited time to gather proselytes to its communion, and then to cease when it had become established. Dr. Stevens has designated Methodism as "a revival church in its spirit." We add

to this, that revivals are an essential part of its working system. They began with its origin, and instrumentally have proved a chief source of its increase. As long as it preserves its original mission in the world, revivals must continue to make an important part of Methodist history, and give life and efficiency to its agencies. Revivals are synonymous with demonstrative Methodism. Its spread has been coextensive with the prevalence of these "seasons of refreshing."

It is a grateful part of our duty, in searching and recording the events of Methodism during the last half century, to find such certain evidence that revivals have become neither unusual nor unpopular. They have been, like the "bow of promise," a perpetual sign of the divine favor, or like a "pillar of cloud or of fire," assuring His people of the divine presence. Sometimes they have been like a gentle shower from a single cloud; and "the spirit poured from on high" has limited its gracious influences to a particular locality, and a few scores or hundreds have been converted. At other times they have proved to be the "early and the latter rain," watering alike all parts of the country, and gathering thousands into the church.

That the Methodist Church still retains its revival spirit unabated, is fully proved by its statistics. More than *a hundred thousand* were received into its communion the last year, — the fruit of revivals, — the largest increase of any year but one in the whole period of its history.

We turn next to inquire how far Methodism has maintained its activity and success in the work of church-extension. In a former chapter, we noticed its

earlier efforts to keep up with the rapidly-increasing new settlements of the country, and in introducing itself among the older settlements. Its diligence and enterprise in prosecuting this work of propagandism during the latter have not been less successful than in the former period of its history. We do not now refer so much to its distinctive missionary organization and efforts, as to its watchful and ready disposition to enter every open door, and to establish itself in every new field. Its itinerant system, inspired with an evangelical spirit, fitted it for the work of aggression; and its early success in propagating Christianity in the New World, hardly found a rival in any other denomination of the country. But it was a work never to be finished. The nation was continually expanding; and Methodism, to maintain its honorable position as the pioneer religious sect of the country, must expand with it. It has done this.

The older portions of the land were becoming densely populated; and, to meet the increasing wants of these enlarged communities, Methodism must provide the men, and furnish the religious instruction, that they needed. It has done this also. The inhabitants of the United States have quadrupled during the last half century. The increase of Methodists and Methodist agencies have far exceeded this. Fifty years ago, there were less than seven hundred travelling preachers. Now the Methodist-Episcopal Church alone has more than *nine* times that number. Then the number of Methodists in the nation was a little more than two hundred thousand; now it has increased *nine* fold. Then the Methodist chapels did not exceed *five hundred;* most of them were in the larger towns and

cities; and they were generally small and indifferent structures. They have increased twenty-fold in number, and probably forty-fold in their capacity to accommodate the people; and, instead of being only in the cities and towns, they are scattered, with hardly an exception, in every community, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, where there is a population sufficient to furnish a congregation.

During the last half century the great valley of the Mississippi has filled up with people, who have stretched on the line of emigration to the sources of the Missouri, and have taken possession of the plateaus and mining regions of the interior part of the continent. The Pacific shores have been settled by States large as empires; and Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Texas have been added on the south. The number of States and Territories of the great republic have, in that time, more than doubled. Yet the pioneer of Methodism has entered all these new regions with the earliest emigrant, and been ready to organize a class in the first log-cabin that was built. The vast circuits, as they were then formed, embracing each a whole State, have been divided and subdivided again and again, until their original fields have become the domains of Conferences with scores or hundreds of preachers; and the Methodist-Episcopal Church alone has now more than *sixty* Conferences, where, in 1815, it had only sixteen.

Within these fifty years, there has been but two attempts of any importance to change the radical features in the organization of Methodism. All questions of controversy that have arisen among American Methodists have had respect to church-government, either

as to its form or its administration. There has hardly been the first word of dissent among them in regard to doctrines, and but little respecting the application of doctrines to religious experience. The special creed of Methodism has been "a free, a present, and a full salvation;" and to this all its members have heartily agreed. It could not be expected that there would be such agreement respecting its polity, based as it is on Christian expediency, — a polity the result of pure eclecticism. Taking this into the account, it is more a wonder to us that so little disaffection has arisen from the "disciplinary" arrangement of Methodism, than that there has been as much as there has. The controversies that have arisen have originated more from the apparent antagonism in its form of government with the popular American theory of civil government, than from any alleged suffering or injustice resulting from it. And, however Methodists have differed in regard to the advantages or disadvantages to result from any proposed changes in the Methodist system, they have not differed in their opinion that it was such an one as would naturally grow out of the circumstances under which Methodism originated, and that it was the best to have been adopted in the beginning of its history.

The first subject of controversy, affecting the government of the church, was regarding the sole authority of the bishop to determine the appointments of the preachers. This power had always been vested in him since the organization of the church in 1784, and was naturally given to him at that time, modelled as the new church was mainly after the Wesleyan pattern. Wesley had it unlimitedly respecting all the affairs of his societies. It fell into his hands from the manner in which

these societies were created. His system was built after the military pattern, and said to every itinerant, "Go;" and he went. His paternal spirit, his superior wisdom, his disinterestedness, and the confidence of his ministers in his judgment and integrity, led them all, without complaint or reluctance, to obey his commands. The American branch of Methodism, for nearly twenty years, was virtually under his direction, through his "assistant;" and precedent doubtless influenced the newly-organized church to confer the same "power of appointments" on the bishops.

This power is an anomaly among the ecclesiastical arrangements of Protestantism; and only because it has not been abused, and has proved such an efficient method of carrying out another anomalous arrangement, — the itinerancy, — would it have been supposed to be acceptable or practicable. There is, indeed, something of moral sublimity in the fact that six thousand men voluntarily submit the direction of their labors to the arbitrament of a single man, and that his word shall determine with whom and where they shall minister; and that a million of Christians also cheerfully submit to him to decide, without their dictation, who shall minister unto them the Word of Life. Strange as this centralized authority may appear in its theory, in practice it has worked with great efficiency, and to the satisfaction of the people.

With only one exception, — in the General Conference of 1792, — no attempt was made to modify or change this "power of appointments" until the General Conference of 1812. From that time to 1828, it was a disturbing question in that body. It was proposed that the presiding elders, who were also appointed by the

bishop, and by whose advice the appointments of the preachers were usually made, should be elected by their respective Annual Conferences, and should constitute a legal counsel, with the bishop, in making the appointments of the preachers. Probably no subject relating to the polity of Methodism ever received more attention, and elicited more earnest and able disputation, than this did. Many of the strongest men of the church were honestly and zealously committed for or against the proposed change. The General Conference, for three successive sessions, were nearly equally divided respecting it. In 1820, quite a majority voted for the new measure; and the vote only failed of being consummated by the known opposition to it of the senior bishop, McKendree, and of the newly-elected bishop, Soule. It was then voted to defer its application for four years. In 1824, it was further deferred until 1828, and was never again revived.

We do not propose to determine which side of this disputed question had the best argument. It was well that the subject was so thoroughly discussed. Many of those who advocated the change, in later years of their lives were led to adopt different opinions respecting it from those which they formerly held. They had at the time the popular side; and their chief arguments were that it was but just and proper that those who submitted themselves in their appointments to the disposal of others should have a voice in choosing the appointing authority, and that it was American.

What would have been the effect on the church, whether to benefit or to injure, had the proposed measure been consummated, it is impossible now to decide. The authority remains where it was from the beginning,

—with the bishops; but other changes have taken place that affect the appointments of the preachers, that are not laid down in the statute book. In former times, what was said respecting the future appointee of any circuit or station was to the bishop or presiding elder. In later times, the arrangement is rather with the preacher himself. The negotiations are so complete and timely, often months before the Conference, and before he is to enter upon the duties of his new field, that the work of the bishop is made exceedingly easy, by simply giving his sanction, and perfecting the previous arrangements. We do not say that this unwritten law is not a good one. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Perhaps this practice, now so common, that is without the authority of statute, is only the forerunner of what will soon be done by the sanction of law.

Had the presiding elder been made elective, it is not unlikely that it would have popularized his office. In the day when this controversy transpired, presiding elders were the most talented and influential ministers of the church. The times of their visits to the several circuits of their districts were hailed as religious holidays. The quarterly meetings were made great festivals, and the "elder's sermon" anticipated as a "feast of fat things." The experience and talents of these subordinate bishops naturally made them the umpires to whom all church questions of dispute were referred with confidence: they were a "power" in the churches. No one presumed to doubt the necessity of the presiding elder's office to the existence of the itinerancy, or, perhaps, to the existence of Methodism itself. How far this state of things might have been encouraged and perpetuated, and the office and officer have been popu-

larized by making him elective by his brethren, it is impossible for us to say.

From 1820 to 1830, American Methodism was disturbed, and its integrity threatened, by what was called the "radical controversy." The matter in dispute had respect to the introduction of laymen into the higher councils of the church. These councils, embracing the Annual and General Conferences, had always been clerical. It was proposed that an equal number of representative laymen be introduced into them. The controversy to which we have before referred was between the ministers only. This one was chiefly between ministers and laymen, rendering it more difficult to conduct it with moderation, and more liable to be mingled with asperities and personalities; because mostly prosecuted outside of any regular deliberative body. Unhappily, these characteristics mingled largely in this dispute.

That the government of the Methodist church was controlled by the ministry, was a necessary result of the manner in which Methodism originated and progressed. Dr. Stevens, in his "Centenary of Methodism," justly remarks, "Its early preachers went forth, not at the call of the people, but to call the people. A small body of ecclesiastics, they travelled the land, preaching and forming societies, on circuits hundreds of miles long. These societies were usually feeble, individually: they were composed mostly of poor, dispersed, and unlettered people; and the preachers were compelled to have the almost exclusive management of their scattered, untrained churches. It was necessary for the itinerants to meet periodically, to revise and re-arrange their labors; these periodical assemblies were called by the unpreten-

tious name of Conferences: it would have been impossible to have gathered in their sessions any satisfactory representation of the societies. The Conferences grew into the supreme legislature and judiciary of the church, and thus came to pass, at last, the startling anomaly of the largest religious body in the republic, — a body, too, entirely pervaded by the republican sentiments of the country, yet controlled exclusively, in at least its higher assemblies, by its clergy."

In the organization of the Conference, the American church followed the model of the English, and no opposition or disaffection on the part of the laity was shown towards the arrangement for nearly fifty years, and until just before the General Conference of 1820. The advocates of the new movement were found mostly within the bounds of a few central Conferences, with their headquarters at Baltimore. They took the pretentious name of "Reformers," and began their work by issuing first a paper at Trenton, N. J., and a few years later another in Baltimore; in both of which they assailed with considerable bitterness the institutions and authorities of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. A few prominent ministers took sides with the discontented. Many of the disaffected were arraigned by ecclesiastical authority, tried, and expelled the church. They organized a society, — "The Associated Methodist Reformers;" held their conventions; and memorialized the General Conference in 1828. The merits of their petition were fully discussed, and the requests of the memorialists for lay representation denied. The zeal and temper that had characterized the movement were too great for its authors to submit quietly to the denial of their petitions, and they organized a new church, — the Methodist Protestant Church.

The question of "lay delegation" in the Methodist-Episcopal Church remained undisturbed for many years. The bitter feeling that had shown itself so violently in the personalities of the past controversy, had doubtless contributed to the failure of the "Reformers" in securing the changes that they desired; and the church generally were glad of rest from the strife, and devoted its attention and labors to building up, rather than to tearing down, the sacred edifice that the fathers had reared. There has continued to prevail to a greater or less extent, however, an opinion that the time would come when the laity could be advantageously introduced into the chief councils of the church. No formal attempt was again made to effect this change, until the General Conference of 1852. Then a few memorialists, from different parts of the country, petitioned that body to provide for it. At the next Conference, in 1856, these memorials increased in their number, but the Conference decided that it was inexpedient to make the change. At the next Conference, in 1860, the number of petitioners had very largely increased; and the Conference declared that it was ready to introduce lay representation when it was clearly ascertained that the church generally desired it, and referred the matter to a popular vote throughout the church. A decided majority voted against it. The matter was again urged on the General Conference of 1864, and was kindly entertained; but nothing was officially done to provide for lay delegation.

There is, no doubt, an increasing sentiment among the Methodist people, favorable to the introduction of the laity as a corporate part of the General Conference: those who honestly doubt the expediency of such a

change are comparatively mild in their opposition to it. In fact, the opposition arises less from a disposition to retain exclusive power in the hands of the clergy than the supposed impracticability of any plan to confer it in part on the laity. That some method will be adopted, and at no distant time, when the popular reproach will be taken away, that the laymen of the Methodist-Episcopal Church have no voice in making the laws that govern them; and when the laity will be made to feel a greater responsibility to support, and an increased interest in, the institutions of the church, because they have with the ministry a joint authority in making its laws, — there can be but little doubt; and, notwithstanding the supposed impracticability of the thing, by those who oppose it, it will soon appear that "where there is a will there is a way."

While Methodism has proved its claim to be called an earnest and spiritual religion, by the revivals that have always accompanied it; and shown its title to the credit of being a successful and active organization for evangelization, by its rapid diffusion; and also has carefully guarded with a watchful, if not too conservative, eye against any changes in its policy that might impair its efficiency, — it has been steadily multiplying its exponents of material prosperity; it has rapidly increased the number, and improved the quality, of its church edifices. This may be regarded as a legitimate proof of its success, and of its extending influence in the land.

Fifty years ago its humble "chapels," as they were called, were very few in number, and mostly located in the larger towns or cities. The itinerant was more accustomed to preach standing behind a chair, in some private dwelling, or from the platform of the teach-

er's desk, in a country school-house, than from behind a cushioned pulpit in a church: it was necessary that he should do this, or not preach at all. The members of the Methodist Church were thinly scattered over a wide extent of country, and were generally poor and unable to build churches: they made churches of their houses. The few chapels that had been built were small, and usually without any architectural beauty. Methodism by its rule, "Let all our churches be built neat and plain," had rather discouraged than cherished any attempt to build spacious or beautiful edifices. The rule was convenient for the general poverty of its members. The spirit that was shown in respect to dress applied also to the "chapels:" they were rather "drabbish," and their exceeding plainness was commonly called a proof of virtue and humility.

As Methodism improved in its social position, in its wealth, and in culture, it also improved in its taste, and the liberality it evinced in the style of its church edifices and in the rapid multiplication of their number. The Methodist-Episcopal Church has built during the last fifty years, on an average, two new churches in every three days. The value of its churches has increased in this period not less than fifty-fold.

This great improvement in church building ought to be estimated, chiefly, from its utilitarian ends. The practical character of Methodism will always first regard it in this light, and will ask how far the improvement gives better accommodations to the people in worshipping God; how it makes the churches more accessible and attractive, and their appliances for religious purposes more convenient. These, the first considerations in order decide on the location and quality of churches,

are generally the chief ones that now determine the character of Methodist church edifices. But churches have a moral influence on their occupants. They increase or diminish self-respect, good taste, and order, as they possess, or are wanting in, architectural attractiveness. The converse of this is also true; and, as the taste and liberality of communities improve, they will indicate it by the improved style and beauty of their churches. Judged by this rule, there has been great advance in the good taste of Methodists. Instead of the ordinary, uninviting structures of former days, contrasting unfavorably with the churches of other denominations, they now compare, without disparagement, with the average of those churches, and far exceed them in their number.

There may, however, be a danger to Methodism from a lavish extreme in costly churches, — in making them inaccessible to the humble, and in creating a spirit of caste among the worshippers. Methodism should never forget that its mission has been to the common people; and that, while it provides tasteful, commodious edifices for their convenience, and in which the masses may feel at home, if it attempts to, or incidentally shall, supplant the poor by its costly and luxurious churches, or by the expensiveness of their support shall make their gorgeous temples inhospitable to the humble, or by the high tax on pews make it impossible for only the rich to enter them, the glory of Methodism will depart, and another Wesley or Asbury will be required to come forth, and preach "good tidings to the poor." Methodists, in building churches, should follow the mean between stinginess and extravagance, between baseness and pride, and, while they provide generously and taste-

fully a church to worship in, should carefully avoid building churches to be worshipped.

During the period of which we now write, Methodism has vastly improved its financial policy for the support of its ministers. We have incidentally referred to this in a former chapter; but it should be alluded to here in order to give a complete view of Methodistic progress in this period. For many years the church suffered from the erroneous sentiment, that its ministers were to be supported by charity, and not from a fair compensation for their services. For this the people were hardly in fault, for they were taught it by the ministers themselves. What made the matter worse, they were, indirectly at least, taught that charity required but little; and they obeyed their teachers. The evils resulting from this became alarmingly great, and many of the best ministers of the church were compelled to locate. The depleted ranks of the itinerants required that a change of policy should be made in respect to ministerial support; and from *sixty-four* dollars a year, — the amount designated as a preacher's allowance annually — the sum was first raised to *eighty* dollars, and, in 1816, it was increased to *one hundred* dollars. Rarely did the preacher, in early times, receive his full disciplinary allowance; but soon this began to be more promptly and fully paid. Then there came a further provision for his wants, in the name of "table expenses;" and still further, for "house rent;" and then, next, for "travelling expenses and fuel." His wife and children also became unconditional claimants for their "allowance." Then came the building of parsonages, and furnishing them. And last of all, within a few years, the church

has adopted the rational and liberal policy of estimating, in a reasonable sum, the "salary" of the preacher,—a salary ordinarily sufficient to provide him a comfortable living. The superannuated preachers and their widows were not forgotten in this improving financial progress. Annual collections were ordered in their behalf; and the worn-out itinerant began to receive something more becoming his claims, to meet the necessities of his enfeebled life.

This great advance, beyond former years, in the support of the ministry is partly owing, doubtless, to the increased wealth of the church. But it is to be attributed more to the improved views of the people respecting the claims of the ministry to receive it. In fact, there is no lesson that Methodism has shown itself more apt and willing to learn, and to apply in practice, than that "the liberal heart deserveth liberal things, and by liberal things it shall stand."

An interesting phase of Methodism, for many years past, has been the fraternal relations reciprocally cultivated between the Methodist-Episcopal Church in the United States, and the Wesleyan Methodists in England. While the followers of Wesley have always been disposed to exhibit to all denominations of Christians a cheerful catholic spirit, and to say to such, "If thy heart be as my heart, give me thy hand," it was peculiarly fitting that these two bodies — the principal representatives of the followers of Wesley on both sides of the Atlantic, and so nearly one in government, doctrine, and spirit — should cherish for each other a strong denominational affection. The members of the Wesleyan body from England and Ireland, and some of its

ministers, emigrating to this country, united with the American church; both English and American Methodism, in their missionary work, began to cultivate the same or adjacent fields. They were the same in all that constituted one church, — in character and design. It was therefore natural, by the attraction of affinity, that they should establish between themselves those mutual interchanges of Christian greetings that would encourage and cheer each other in a common service. In 1820, the General Conference of the Methodist-Episcopal Church delegated the Rev. Dr. Emory to represent it at a subsequent session of the Wesleyan Conference. At the following General Conference, Rev. Richard Reese, accompanied by Rev. John Hannah, from the Wesleyans, came as responding delegates to this country. With scarcely an exception, this interchange of reciprocal Christian affection has been continued every four years, and has contributed to strengthen the joint influence of Methodism, both English and American, throughout the world.

The history of Methodism has always disclosed this remarkable fact, that, whenever a man of peculiar gifts was necessary for its success and development, the right man always appeared in his place to meet the emergency. There were some general qualifications for every Methodist preacher. He must have an undoubted religious experience, and a certain persuasion that he was called to preach the gospel; he must be conscientiously attached to Methodist usages, as the itinerancy, and the general supervisional policy of the church; he must have a firm belief in the truth of the peculiar doctrines of Methodism, and be ready to devote himself

to work or to suffer in an itinerant life, — these were common requisites for every preacher. But, beyond these, there were others, arising from the peculiar character of certain communities, or from some new interest of the growing church, that required a man of special endowment to do a particular work. Our attention is constantly arrested, in the study of Methodism, by the apparently strange, but certainly opportune, appearance of such men at the right time; and not less so in the latter than in the former half-century of Methodist history.

The habits and pioneer life of the Western population required an earnest, athletic, and resolute nature in the itinerants, to subdue the sturdy emigrants, and break, rather than mould, them to the pattern of the cross. Such men appeared in James Axley and Peter Cartwright, in Jesse Walker and James B. Finley. The ardent temper of the Southern mind required to be controlled by the influence of spirits like that of William Capers, or Hope Hull, or William Winans. The New-England population, with its Calvinistic creed, and a nature kindred to its stern climate, required the patient, steady, and imperturbable qualities of George Pickering or Enoch Mudge, of Epaphras Kibby or David Kilburn, or of the prompt, facetious Billy Hibbard. Generally, then, the "right man was found in the right place."

Methodism, as a system, is a combination of practical expedients to teach and to save men. Preaching is its usual method; but it employs, in addition to this, every consistent agency to accomplish its end. It is inventive as well as practical. From its origin, Methodism found the press an efficient instrument to aid its designs; in

later years, a very important one. It has been vigorously engaged in circulating tracts, books, and periodicals, to defend its doctrines and polity, or to educate the popular mind in the evangelical truths of the gospel. It has always found men enough, and men who were qualified, in its itinerant ranks, who could use the press in this designated mission. The importance of a specific organization for missionary efforts began to be manifest as the church became established; and there were found men, who, seeing the need of such an organization, had the genius to devise the plan, and courage to put it in execution, out of which came the grand missionary scheme of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. When men were needed for the inauguration of missions to the Indians, there was ready for the work a Case or a Finley, to meet the demand. When, a few years later, there were found here many emigrants from the land of Luther, as sheep without a shepherd, a Nast and a Jacoby were providentially raised up to lead in establishing missions among the Germans of the States, or in the "Fatherland." For many years the church, intently engaged in direct evangelical labors, failed to comprehend the importance of general education, and had not an institution of learning, of high grade, under its immediate patronage. The importance of such institutions was hardly felt. But Providence gave the church a Fisk, a Ruter, an Olin, and others, like them, qualified to advocate the value of general learning to denominational success, and to direct in the establishment of seminaries and colleges under the control of the church.

Some of these men for the times had great versatility of talent. They were mighty men in the pulpit,

but they also comprehended the theory and the practical ends of the new movements that the exigencies of Methodism required. The history of this period of the church is mostly the application and the results of this talent applied to the various objects requiring it. There were many such men; and Methodism seemed well adapted to make them. It does not come within our plan to give narratives of them, but one of them deserves a special notice. His life and labors were identical with the principal developments of Methodism for the first half of the present century. Taken all in all he had not, probably, a superior in the church during that time. The name of Nathan Bangs can never perish where Methodism is known. He began his service as one of the first missionaries in Upper Canada, and passed through nearly every grade of trust and duty to which the church could assign him, — as a stationed preacher and presiding elder, as agent of its Book Establishment and editor of its principal periodicals, as one of the founders and the chief secretary of its missionary society, and president of its largest university, and as the official historian of the denomination. He filled every office, and performed every duty, to which he was called, with honor to himself, and to the satisfaction and credit of the church. It is because Methodism has been so highly favored with a class of men like Nathan Bangs that its history has been so eventful, and that its present position in the land is so honorable.

If Methodism, by the divine favor, may attribute its prosperity to the quality and the opportune advent of its leading ministers, it may also do it, in an eminent sense, from the wise and fortunate choice it has made in the selection of its bishops. These men, of all others,

should be the ablest and best men in the church. The extent and authority of their supervision of all church affairs; the work that appertains to their office of presiding in the Conferences, of determining the appointments of the preachers, of the superintendence of all the missions, of deciding questions of law, and of giving direction generally to the various agencies of the church, — require that they should possess every noble gift for the functions of their office. How kindly and graciously God has dealt with his people in directing the lot in their election! The introduction of only one man into the office of bishop, who sought his own and not the welfare of the church; of one ambitious, incapable, or domineering mind, — might have seriously deranged, if it did not destroy, the harmony of the ecclesiastical system of Methodism; — a system without a parallel for its efficiency, if administered by godly, wise, and disinterested superintendents, but that could have been made the most subversive of justice and order, if directed or controlled by a wanton and an unequal hand.

How often has it been said that "the Lord made Asbury the bishop for the infancy and childhood of Methodism"! His intervention has not been less manifest in the appointments of Asbury's successors. Of him and his compeer, McKendree, we have already written. It is not proper that we should say much of the bishops now living; but it is not improper to say that they are constantly proving to the church how wisely it has conferred on them the responsible duties of the episcopal office. Of the dead we can write more freely.

In 1816, Enoch George and Robert R. Roberts were elected bishops. Bishop George was a representative man of Methodism in his day. He had very good nat-

ural endowments, that supplied in part his want of culture. He was thoroughly possessed of the Methodist spirit in his religious experience and in zeal. That which made him eminently fit for a leader and an example to the ministry, was his extraordinary gifts as a preacher. Powerful preachers were the great want of the church at that time. One of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States said of Bishop George's power in the pulpit, "His eloquence was absolutely irresistible." He had, too, a warm heart and great sympathy for the preachers. This was greatly needed. Bishop Asbury, for whom all the preachers had the affection and faith that a child feels for a father, had just died; and nothing was more required than a bishop in whom every one could confide as they had in their departed father. They found one in Bishop George.

Bishop Roberts was another model primitive Methodist bishop. His ability as a preacher was less than that of his associate. He had, naturally, excessive modesty and diffidence; but his Christian grace enabled him so to conquer this, as to be at ease in whatever station his duty called him. In this he was a noble pattern for his brethren. Bishop Morris describes him as possessing "the gracefulness of a finished gentleman, with the simplicity of a plain Christian farmer;" as one "who could feel alike at home in the pulpit of an eastern city, and in the open stand of a western camp-meeting; in the chair of a General Conference, deciding questions of order, and in an Indian's camp, talking about Jesus and heaven;" that "no one ever performed the various and responsible duties of the episcopal office with more judgment and less censure than Bishop Roberts."

Joshua Soule and Elijah Hedding were elected bishops in 1824. They were both of them New-England men in their origin, but in many respects they were quite unlike. Bishop Soule was stately and apparently reserved in society. Bishop Hedding had an easy dignity, but was familiar in his associations with his brethren. They came into office in a stormy time, — a time that was threatening to change some of the fundamental features of the economy of the church. Bishop Soule was a conservative; Bishop Hedding was a progressive. A conservative was needed then. The peril of the church was rather from premature changes, than from its strong adhesion to the old landmarks. The tenacity of Bishop Soule probably saved the church from an unwise radical change in its polity. He always gave evidence of his conservatism. He was the author of the "restrictive rules," — the real constitution of the church. Though naturally made to be the leader of a High-Church party, he was eminently useful, and his special gifts were such as the times required. He remained true to his antecedents to the last, and, in 1844, went with the Methodist Church South.

Bishop Hedding was not so popular a preacher as Bishop Soule. He was noted, however, as the best expounder of ecclesiastical law, probably, that the church has ever produced. Methodist law was then more in precedent than in statute. Some one was needed in the episcopal office whose ability and influence would give official interpretation and an improved form to the statute. Bishop Clark says of him, "When he entered the episcopal office, Methodist jurisprudence was in its inchoate condition. No one has done more to develop and mature it than Bishop Hedding. The soundness of

his views upon the doctrines and discipline of the church was so fully and so universally conceded, that, in the end, he became almost an oracle in these respects, and his opinions are regarded with profound veneration." And, we may add, he was the man, in these respects, that the exigencies of the church demanded.

We will refer to but one more who filled the episcopal office, and who, though his term of service was short, contributed to give permanence and character to Methodism. John Emory was elected bishop in 1832. Before his election he had done good service as a polemical writer, and also in defending his church from some violent assaults on its polity. The time had come for Methodism to take higher ground in regard to general and ministerial education. Bishop Emory was the man to lead in it, and the ability he had shown in his writings on other subjects gave him the confidence of the church in his attempts in this direction. He took a foremost rank in advocating a course of study for candidates for orders, and in founding the Wesleyan University and Dickinson College,—two of the first-class and most prominent institutions of learning in the church. Though his sudden death cut short his work in the episcopacy, he nevertheless contributed to awaken an interest in the subject of ministerial and general education that has continued and extended until it has shown its results in improving all the institutions of Methodism.

Such were some of the men whom Providence opportunely gave to the church to fill its highest offices, and mainly to control its destinies,—men who by their special qualifications were either to be remarkable examples of apostolic preaching, or of a dignified and easy presidency in deliberative council; of prudent conserv-

atism to arrest imprudent changes in polity, or to give system and clearness to church jurisprudence, or to create an improving, healthy interest in the church in favor of all its educational enterprises. Whatever causes have aided to form, to preserve, or to direct American Methodism for the last fifty years, no one cause has had a more healthy and beneficial influence, and has contributed more to make Methodism what it now is, than the noble qualities and labors of the men that have filled its episcopal office.

This period has been distinguished for the introduction of many collateral agencies that have affected Methodism,— in its growth, its position, and its resources for doing good. Its distinctive missionary scheme has been organized; its system of general education has been established, and also its present system of religious instruction in Sunday schools. The character of its literature, and the means of its dissemination, have been much improved. These, though not an essential part of organized Methodism, are so related to all its practical movements as to be each entitled to receive the notice of a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

METHODISM AND EDUCATION.

"Add to your faith, — knowledge."

WHAT interest has American Methodism taken in, and what has it done to promote, general education? Or, more definitely, what has it done to promote the education of its own people? A different answer would be given to this question for different periods of its history. Since 1820, it has been working manfully, and with considerable success, to gain a front rank among the educators of the United States. Previous to that time it did comparatively nothing in that direction. What produced this change, and what effect it has had on the position and influence of the denomination, are topics worthy of consideration.

Any indifference or opposition towards intellectual culture found no precedent or encouragement in the founders of Methodism, — the Wesleys and Whitefield. They were educated men, and placed a high value on sound learning, especially among the common people. One of their first efforts to improve the condition of their converts was an attempt to found a charity school for the benefit of the children of the colliers of Kingswood. It proved to be a germ of one that, ten years

later, grew into a complete literary institution; that has continued to the present time, devoted exclusively to the benefit of the sons of Wesleyan ministers. When this became too limited to accommodate all that was required for its noble end, another similar school was founded, in 1811, at Woodhouse Grove, near Leeds. In these two institutions,— the fruit of Wesley's interest in the education of the children of his preachers,— there are now from two to three hundred of the sons of ministers and missionaries, taught, clothed, and fed gratuitously. Wesley also established schools for poor children at Newcastle and in London, made regulations for their government, and collected and contributed funds for their support. He was always an earnest advocate and a liberal patron of the general education of the people. But his time and his labors, and the labors of his itinerant helpers, were mostly engrossed in efforts to promote more directly the moral and religious improvement of society. His was chiefly one work,— to teach men the way of salvation. His societies, too, were generally poor; and, though illiterate and needing instruction, they could only furnish him with scanty means to establish schools. His versatility in expedients, and his industry, led him to provide what would prove a partial substitute for schools; and he published tracts and small books on moral and religious subjects, and encouraged all his people to read them and to cultivate a taste for reading. When, however, Wesleyan Methodism became established, and its resources to increase educational agencies were more abundant, its attention was more systematically given to the work of common education. It has now over five hundred day or parochial schools, with more than sixty thousand scholars. Besides these,

it has a Normal Institution at Westminster, with more than a hundred students preparing to be teachers; a collegiate institution at Taunton; a classical college at Sheffield; and two theological schools, for the training of young ministers, at Richmond and Didsbury. To these should be added the hundreds of day schools that it sustains in its mission stations. The educational provisions of Wesleyan Methodism are fast rivalling in extent and quality those of any other ecclesiastical establishment of Great Britain. Its ministers, too, while they retain the evangelical spirit and zeal of the early Wesleyan itinerants, are distinguishing themselves among the clergy of the kingdom for their thorough literary culture.

In the United States, educational movements under Methodist auspices were for many years too insignificant to be of much credit to the denomination. In fact, until near 1820, it literally did nothing successfully for the establishment of schools. While multiplying its converts with a ratio far greater than that of other churches, and while these were each giving considerable attention to promote education, and had at least one or more institutions of high grade in the United States, Methodism had not a single seminary or college in the land. This is a fact so remarkable as to require an explanation.

American Methodism initiated an educational movement at the time of its independent organization, in 1784. It provided to establish a college, with ample means, and with great promise of success. The work was proposed by Dr. Coke. He had just arrived from England, ordained as the first bishop of the new church, and was probably the only liberally educated man in

the new organization. With his large expectations for future Methodism on this continent, he supposed that such an institution of learning would give prestige and influence to the denomination. He desired that it should be a full college. Bishop Asbury, more practical in his views than Coke, and better acquainted with the wants of the church and with the mind of the American people, preferred that whatever was done for education should be to establish schools of a lower grade in different parts of the country. He believed that these would be better adapted to the wants of the masses, with whom Methodism had most to do. The Conference, however, yielded to the wishes of Dr. Coke, and Cokesbury College was begun. A considerable sum was raised for it, and quite an extensive building erected, at Abingdon, about twenty-five miles from Baltimore, Md. The institution was opened with imposing dedicatory services, in December, 1787, Bishop Asbury preaching the dedicatory sermon from the ominous text, "O man of God! there is death in the pot."

Cokesbury College does not appear to have ever attained the distinction proposed in the manifesto sent forth by its founders, and which was anticipated by its friends. The burden and perplexity of raising funds to keep it in operation fell on Asbury, and were often the source of great solicitude to him. Eight years after its establishment he received intelligence that it had burned down. It is difficult to determine whether the news brought grief or relief to his mind; for he said, "Its enemies may rejoice, and its friends need not mourn. Would any man give me ten thousand pounds a year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house, I would not do it." Bishop Coke, however, was not dis-

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couraged by the disastrous fate of the college building. With the aid of some friends in Baltimore, another house was purchased in that city, and the college re-opened. But it, too, was burned; and with it ended all formal attempts of Methodism, for many years, to establish institutions for education.

Some of the later writers on Methodist history seem to think that the mind of the church has always been disposed to encourage and to patronize such institutions. We think that in this opinion they are mistaken. Dr. Bangs, though with less embellishment than some others, states the truth in his narrative of the facts, and admits that the interest manifested by the church in later years in behalf of education was a conversion from former prejudices or indifference. It is quite certain, that, even while Cokesbury College existed, Methodists generally had very little appreciation of its importance; and that, while Asbury was toiling and troubled to raise the funds for its support, he had serious doubts respecting the expediency of attempting to establish an institution of such pretensions. His practical sense saw that parochial or common schools were most needed, to meet the wants of the denomination. After it was twice consumed, the bishop, and the church generally, seemed to understand the event as a providential indication that God did not design that Methodists should devote their energies in behalf of education, — at least, that the time had not come for them to do it. In some instances, doubtless, this interpretation of providence went so far as to create an indifference, if not a hostility, to education itself; and many feared, if they encouraged intellectual culture, they would find it disastrous to the spirituality and purity of the church.

There were various reasons why Methodists might have such a feeling in respect to education. The church was all absorbed in its great evangelical work. Nothing could compare or come in competition with the claims of this. Wesley's interpretation of the design of God in raising up the Methodists, "to spread scriptural holiness over the land," was taken in its literal and special meaning, as definitely as the Crusaders held to "the capture of the holy city" as the sole object of their crusade. Whatever might divert the attention of the people from this one great object was treated with more than indifference. It was held in suspicion, and naturally opposed.

It could not be expected that the itinerants of those days would be very strong advocates of classical education at least, for they were none of them liberally educated men. They were indeed studious men, especially in the Scriptures; but their literary training had been confined to the curriculum of the common school, — at best, a very limited course. It is not common in the history of reforms that men take the lead in, and urge with much tenacity the importance of, that of which they are themselves ignorant; and it would not be likely for the itinerants, who directed all the movements of the church, to act as pioneers, and advocate the importance to others of an education much in advance of their own. The Methodists too, of that time, were generally poor, and had but little to give for the establishment of schools. Believing the propagation of the gospel as of paramount importance, they would give all that they could for this object exclusively.

Probably that which most of all indisposed Methodists to regard with favor any efforts to promote a superior

grade of education was the pre-eminence given to it by other religious sects, — especially in placing it above the inward experience of regeneration, and making it a substitute for this experience in the qualifications of the ministry. Methodists feared every thing that could possibly be put in the place of an experimental religion. If, in their indifference to the claims of education, they appeared to be its enemies, they would rather accept this imputation than to be suspected of placing intellectual culture above the religion of the heart. They adopted Wesley's words, "Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving souls is better;" and they preferred the better part.

For many years, Methodism was content to neglect all efforts to establish educational institutions. If it was not its praise, it was not, under all the circumstances, a very great reproach. Notwithstanding this neglect, it was eminently successful in its mission to save men. The influence of its religious life improved the social condition of its members, and with this came the necessity for superior schools, for seminaries, and colleges; for it had always been the patron of common schools. That it was ready in due time, when it could consistently do it, and it was demanded, to provide a higher grade, or classical education, for its children, shows how faithfully it followed its great rule of Christian expediency, and modified all its efforts by the leadings of Providence. When it did engage in this work, it did it heartily and successfully, and soon became a leader in the educational movements of the country.

To inaugurate the work successfully, notwithstanding the prejudices that existed against it in the church, required the courage and zeal of men who were conscien-

tiously persuaded of its importance, and were ready, amid apparent failures, to prosecute it to success. A few such men engaged in it.

The first seminary, or academy, that introduced the revival of educational measures in American Methodism was established at New Market, N. H., in 1817, under the patronage of the New-England Conference. Dr. Martin Ruter, a New-England itinerant, and, for many years after, distinguished for his successful labors as an educator in the institutions of learning in the Methodist Church, was the chief agent in its establishment. It prospered, though financially embarrassed, for several years; and, in 1825, was removed to Wilbraham, Mass. Its endowments were greatly increased; and it soon became one of the most popular seminaries in the church or nation.

A year or two later, another was begun in New-York city, patronized by the New-York Conference. This one originated chiefly through the influence of Dr. Nathan Bangs. About the same time, a Collegiate Institute, under the supervision of Dr. S. K. Jennings, was commenced at Baltimore, Md. Neither of these institutions, as independent enterprises, accomplished very much for the cause of education; but, supported by some of the leading men in their patronizing Conferences, they gave to the cause of education in the church new interest, and brought the subject directly before the General Conference in 1820. This Conference considered the relation of Methodism to education, and "recommended to all the Annual Conferences to establish, as soon as practicable, literary institutions under their own control." It was a decisive step in the direction of progress. Yet there were those who opposed it,

and thought that the church was departing from its legitimate work. Dr. Bangs, who was foremost in advocating the new measure, says: "That opposition should be manifested to these efforts to raise the standard of education by any of the disciples of the illustrious Wesley, whose profound learning added so much splendor to his character as an evangelical minister, may seem strange to some. This, however, was the fact; and their unreasonable opposition, exemplified in a variety of ways, tended not a little to paralyze for a season the efforts of those who had enlisted in this cause; while the apathy of others retarded its progress, and made its final success somewhat uncertain."

The interval of four years, and the discussion on the subject, prepared the General Conference in 1824 to commit itself, in very positive and emphatic language, in favor of a movement for education throughout the church. It deplored the past neglect in respect to it. It declared, that, "unless effective measures can be adopted for securing proper attention to the rising generation under our care, we may anticipate unhappy consequences." It reaffirmed its resolution of 1820, and called on each Annual Conference "to use its utmost exertions" to establish a seminary in its bounds. From this Conference, Methodism became the decided friend and patron of superior educational institutions. Many of its men of strength heartily enlisted in their support.

No one at that time did more, and probably none since, to give the church the honorable position it assumed to promote intellectual culture, than Dr. Wilbur Fisk. He joined the itinerancy just at the time when the subject was beginning to attract the attention of

Methodists. Before this, they had not a literary institution of note in their patronage. His mind was at once directed to its importance, and he sought to have one established on a permanent and promising foundation. Through his efforts, with others, the academy at Wilbraham was commenced; and he was appointed its principal. Its success is well known. He prepared its model, and, by his pen and with eloquent words, called the attention of the church to the value of the institution. It became the type of scores of others, now scattered through all parts of the country. The reports of the Committee on Education in the General Conference of 1824, and of 1828,—documents that were like keynotes to the church on the subject, and that fully committed the church to educational movements,—were from his pen.

The spirit that was thus aroused soon demanded an institution of a still higher grade. The Northern and Eastern Conferences united to found the Wesleyan University at Middletown, Conn., in 1831; and Dr. Fisk was naturally, and without a competitor, chosen its president. This, in addition to the part he had already taken in awaking the people to the subject, his devotion to it, and his abilities, made him more than ever a leader in the cause of education. Students gathered to the institution from every part of the nation. Many of these, prepared under his supervision, went forth from it; and, by his recommendation, were chosen presidents, professors, and teachers in the rapidly multiplying colleges and seminaries under the patronage of the church throughout the United States.

His heart was in his work. He believed that he was doing what Providence designed him to do. And when,

in 1836, he was elected bishop, he declined the office, saying, "If my health would allow me to perform the work of the episcopacy, I dare not accept it; for I believe I can do more for the cause of Christ where I am than I could do as a bishop." Who will not say that his decision was not only honest, but wise; and that his duties as an educator of the young, and in showing the people the great value of Christian education, were as important as the work of any bishop?

The extent of educational provisions that have been made in the Methodist Church since the General Conference of 1824, and the interest created, if not the change effected, in the minds of Methodists respecting the importance of education itself, is almost marvellous. These means of education — the select school, the Conference seminary, and the fully incorporated college or university — are distributed everywhere throughout the nation, in every State and Territory, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, controlled by Methodist teachers and filled by Methodist students. Twenty-five of these colleges are connected with the Methodist-Episcopal Church, and ten of them with the Methodist Church South. The first — Augusta College, in Kentucky — was founded in 1825. Next, was the Wesleyan University, at Middletown, in 1831; and after this, in quick succession, was founded Madison, now Alleghany College, in Western Pennsylvania; Dickinson College, at Carlisle, Pa.; Lagrange College, in the South-west; and Randolph Macon College, in Virginia. In eight years from the establishment of the first one, there were five in effective operation in different parts of the country. It is difficult, and not necessary, to give the times and locations of the many others that have since been estab-

lished. They have multiplied with the ratio of two every three years. The liberal increase of their endowments, made during the centenary year of American Methodism, has made their funds quite ample, — probably not less than *five millions* of dollars.

Methodist seminaries — most of which are qualified to fit their students for admission to the best colleges in the United States, or to prepare them by mental training and knowledge to engage in the various industrial pursuits of life — have increased in a much larger ratio than the colleges. They have averaged five new ones for every year for the last forty years. In the number and qualifications of their instructors, in the number and intellectual rank of their students, these seminaries do not suffer by a comparison with any other similar institutions in the land.

What has been the influence of these educational movements on the character, the position, and the prospects of Methodism? First of all, it has had an improving influence on the ministry. There is no need to make any apology for the quality of Methodist itinerants of former times, in respect to their personal piety, or zeal, or sterling, practical sense. In these things there never was a class of ministers that could claim to be their superiors. But, with these qualifications, many of them saw that an improved mental culture would increase their ability to do good. They did not, indeed, suppose that it was necessary to have a college diploma to make a man a successful minister: they never believed this; but they saw that he who was honorably qualified to receive this honor would possess an advantage for his work above him who had it not, and they sought to give this advantage to their succes-

sors in the ministry. The influence of their provisions is already widely felt. The graduates from the various Methodist literary institutions are becoming quite a large proportion in the numbers, and an influential part of the members, of Methodist Conferences, and are generally prepared, by their endowments as well as piety, to fill with honorable distinction any position to which the duties and character of ministers may call them.

The influence of these educational provisions has not been confined to the ministry. This may be more apparent, but it is not more certain, than its beneficial results on the laity. These seminaries and colleges have enabled the children of Methodists, and of the supporters of Methodism, to keep up fully with the improving mental culture that has been going on in all classes of the community. Out of them have come the men and women prepared by their intellectual training for every place of trust and honor to which they might aspire. They have contributed to give wise and honest men to our halls of legislation; they have increased the intelligence, enterprise, and integrity of mercantile life; they have quickened the genius and worth of every kind of artisan; they have furnished a large part of the educators in our schools; they have given to American domestic life a grace and virtue to improve its attractiveness. Not the least of these benefits, these institutions of learning, conserved by a religious influence, have helped to make Methodism itself more vigorous and expanding; they have been nurseries of piety, and from them have come the men and women who, taking foremost positions of influence in the church, and realizing the responsibilities that rest upon it, are leading it on in its great enterprises of evangelization.

Besides the establishment of these general institutions for the intellectual culture of all classes, Methodism has instituted other more specific agencies for the mental improvement of its ministry. Fifty years ago it began this work, by requiring every candidate, before he could be admitted to deacon's orders, to pass an examination in a prescribed course on literary and theological subjects. It has extended this course so that it is now well understood that every person who enters the Methodist ministry must pass an annual examination for four successive years, in quite an extended range of literary and religious subjects; and, when he graduates to elder's orders, he has passed through a training nearly or quite equivalent to that received in the theological schools of other denominations. This quiet and unpretentious mode of cultivating the minds of the young itinerants, while they were actually engaged in preaching, has elevated the general intellectual character of the ministry.

Within a few years Methodism has made further provision for the specific preparatory training of its ministers, by the establishment of "Theological Schools." It has two of these, each with an able corps of instructors, one at Concord, N.H., and the other at Evanston, Ill.; both of which have already given a large number of active, pious, and thoroughly trained graduates to the ministerial work.

The value of the educational provisions of Methodism could be partly told by reference to the number of great men that they have furnished to the church and the country. It would be a delicate task, however, as most of them are still living. But it may be said, that they form a majority, at least, of the bishops of

the church; that they are the presidents, professors, and teachers of Methodist colleges and academies. With hardly an exception, they constitute the noble corps of editors and general Methodist writers; and they stand among the first of those engaged in the regular ministerial service, and supply the chief pulpits of the denomination throughout the land. A few of them have died; but they lived long enough to prove to the world the worth of sound learning united with a godly and earnest life, and to stamp the impress of their greatness on the progressive movements of the church. The names of Ruter and Fisk, of Olin and Dempster, of Emory and Floy, can never fail to be remembered among the early educated men of the denomination, and their memory to be gratefully cherished, as an incense of sweet perfume, in every household of Methodism.

We would not be misunderstood, or be supposed, in our praise of the results of the educational movements of Methodism, to utter a word in depreciation of the "gifts, grace, or usefulness" of the fathers. They were well endowed for the work demanded for their times. It is not unlikely, that if they had given more attention to purely intellectual culture, or had it been made a condition to their entering the ministry, it might have proved, in their circumstances, a bar to their obeying the call of God, or otherwise have disqualified them for an earnest and evangelical ministry. They were men who had no reason to be ashamed of what they were or what they did. Dr. Tefft, in his "Methodism Successful," though in some things too laudatory, very justly says of the early Methodist ministry: "There never was a time, as their success will show, when the heralds of

Methodism did not possess the gifts, graces, and acquisitions necessary to a most efficient discharge of their ministerial duties. They have always been able to meet the representatives of the most thoroughly educated denominations in any sort of theological engagement, and to retire from the field, certainly with advantage, if not with triumph; they have pushed their way along, in spite of all the clamor in relation to their want of learning, routing from the arena those who have made the charge, or outstripping them immeasurably in the race of victory; they have given a glorious demonstration to the world, that a vital and heartfelt experience of the work of regeneration, with a reasonable ability of speech, is far better than mere intellectual culture. But they are now adding to this original advantage from which they do not swerve, that for which their opponents in this country and in Europe made their chief claim of ministerial superiority; and the result is, that, under the influence of both these advantages united, the ministry of Methodism, on both sides of the Atlantic, will soon be the most cultivated, as they have always been the most successful, ministry of modern times."

CHAPTER XVIII.

COLLATERAL AGENCIES OF METHODISM. — ITS MISSIONARY SCHEME.

"A fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall."

METHODISM is itself a grand practical missionary movement, and is becoming more and more a great missionary organization for universal propagandism as it increases and matures its agencies for expansion. That experience in which it originated, — the inward conscious renewal of the heart by the Holy Ghost, — and that same heart experience felt by all its members, produced in them similar and decided fruits, the chief one of which was a spirit of love, — love to God and man. Methodists believed and confessed, that this love was the true form and the sum of pure religion; which they described, in its highest attainment, to be "the perfection of love." But they did not believe that true Christian love consisted in a mere devotional spirit, or in a quietism, or submission to a given state of mind, or in the excitement of emotional ecstasy. All these might exist in the truly renewed heart; but Methodists considered love as inventive, active, and demonstrative in respect to their fellow-men, and comprehending in its universal solicitude the well-being of everybody. It was irrepressible in its motions to seek

the good of man, as well as the glory of God. Hence Wesley and Whitefield began, as soon as this new experience was known to them, to preach to the multitudes at Bristol and London, "We show unto you a more excellent way." Their movements were the legitimate outgrowth of soul conversion. All their subsequent labors, and the co-operative labors of their followers, to lead men to embrace the gospel, had the same relation to their conversions as the fruit of a tree does to the tree itself. They were impelled by love to say, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."

Methodism becomes thus a practical scheme of benevolence, — a missionary scheme; and its entire organization, — in the class-meeting, itinerancy, and supervision, —its peculiarly direct and earnest style of preaching, and its particular doctrines of grace, were all love ingeniously applied to do good to the souls and bodies of men. Its success was the result of this practical benevolence.

This "soul conversion," as it generally distinguished Methodism from the other ecclesiastical sects that existed at the time of its origin, made it also to differ from them in its mode of procedure in its entire missionary scheme. From this, that we denominate the *quo animo* of Methodism, sprung the whole system of itinerant energetic labors that extended from Land's End to the Tweed, and that very soon spread over Ireland, that reached across the Atlantic and sought to embrace in its mission the New World. This spirit set in motion the agencies that brought under its sway the islands that surrounded Great Britain; and first made the West Indies, and then the East Indies, trophies of its power; and, at last, uniting

all its subjects in one grand missionary plan, proposes to spread the gospel over all lands. Whoever attempts to account for the predominant missionary element in Methodism, except from the impulsions of the renewed heart, will utterly fail to discover its true cause, and will do injustice to the great actuating principle that controls it.

Associations for specific missionary purposes belong almost exclusively to the last hundred years. Within that time, nearly every Protestant denomination has identified itself with some individual distinct movement to send the gospel to the destitute. These evangelical schemes have been their glory. That they have been true indices of an improved religious life in the church, there can be no doubt. They have aided all Christians in cherishing a sympathy for each other, and united them in stronger association in doing good, and cultivated in them the spirit and practice of catholicity and liberality. As they originated at first in a measure of the knowledge of the renewing grace of God in the heart, so the cultivation of this grace has, by reflection, increased its experience in Christians themselves; and the modern missionary movements have elevated the whole church to a higher state of sound religious experience. In sowing love, it has reaped love in manifold measure.

The churches of Protestantism have been mutually provoked by their missionary work to love and good works; they have emulated, if not stimulated, each other by noble examples, and by a friendly and commendable rivalry. It is not, however, claiming too much for Methodism to attribute to it a good measure of the influence that has inspired the Protestant churches of this cen-

tury with their missionary spirit. Methodism prepared the way for this development of evangelism, by permeating the churches with much of its own heartfelt religious life; and from this has sprung these extensive movements for direct and vigorous missionary efforts. Every one of the great missionary organizations that were formed in Great Britain near the close of the last century originated in religious communities, or by the personal exertions of men who had received a large measure of their evangelical spirit through the influence of Arminian or Calvinistic Methodism. In their formal association for the purpose, they only took a peculiar way of doing what Methodism had been doing in spirit and with zeal in its own regular itinerant system for half a century before. It had been employing all its resources, uniting its energies, and stretching out its hands, to offer the message of salvation to all who would receive it. True, Wesleyan Methodism did not crystallize its movements in the missionary work into a collateral organization, distinct from its regular method of labor, until a few years after some other societies were formed; but practically it had been doing for years that for which they were created, and Dr. Stevens justly says, "Though Bishop Coke represented the Arminian Methodist mission interest as its founder, secretary, treasurer, and collector, it really took a distinct form some six years before the formation of the first" missionary societies of other churches. He was the pioneer to inaugurate, and gave the pattern after which to construct, these societies. He diffused throughout Great Britain, and through English Methodism in particular, an interest in missionary efforts, by his printed appeals, by his personal addresses, by his own liberal contributions, and

by the collections that he made in behalf of particular missions. He sought out men who would go with him, and he went and introduced them as missionaries to foreign fields; and he returned to Great Britain again and again with glowing reports of their success, and with enthusiastic accounts of the opening fields ripe for the laborers. Dr. Coke was the father of modern Protestant missions. For more than twenty-five years he was the master spirit of the Wesleyan missions, directing and supervising them, and through his personal efforts collecting the funds for their support. When he died, in 1815, on his voyage to the East Indies, to commence another mission, the whole Wesleyan body heard of his death as a special summons for it to assume a responsibility in regard to its missions that it had allowed him chiefly to bear. Then it organized the great Wesleyan Missionary Society, and, by a systematic association of effort, gave a new impulse and vigor to the spirit of evangelism that had always been an essential part of Methodism.

There have been three distinct periods in the Wesleyan missionary movements, corresponding very closely with the evangelical movements of the primitive church. The apostles began by commandment at Jerusalem: this was the home-mission period. Next they extended their labors to the Jews that were scattered abroad: this might be called the colonial period of their missionary work. Last, led by Paul, the early church extended its line to the Gentiles, and fulfilled the comprehensiveness of the commission that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations. Home missionary work occupied the attention and labors of Wesley and his assistants for the first forty-five years.

England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, with the single exception of sending missionaries to the American Colonies, were the limits of their mission field, till the advent of Dr. Coke. Every part of the kingdom had been entered, and the itinerants had occupied every shire. It was the distinctive home-mission period of Wesleyanism.

Dr. Coke enlarged the field, and introduced the period of missions, chiefly to the colonies and dependencies of Great Britain. While at Baltimore, at the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, his heart was fired by the reports of William Black, from Nova Scotia, of the favorable prospects for evangelical labors in that province; and thenceforth for thirty years, he led the Wesleyan missionary movements, mostly in behalf of the British colonies; and through his efforts Methodism was planted in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the West Indies, the islands around Great Britain, and finally in the East Indies. His death opened the last period, — the grand scheme of Wesleyanism to send the gospel to every creature. It called out such men as George Morley, Jabez Bunting, Richard Watson, Richard Reece, William Dawson, and many others, of kindred and energetic spirit, awakened to the responsibility of their position by the death of Coke, who rallied the whole Wesleyan body to engage in the comprehensive plan of universal evangelization. The Wesleyan Missionary Society was then formed. Its fruits have already been gathered from every clime.

American Methodism, like its English ancestor, has always been, both in spirit and form, a missionary work. The nature of the soil it has cultivated made it for many years even more so, if possible, than English

Methodism. Its system of labor has been to send men to preach the gospel, and not to wait to be sought for, — an extensive and extending home missionary scheme. Every successive year furnished it with an enlarged field for occupation as the older States became more densely populated, or the vast unoccupied West was peopled by the tide of emigration that flowed into it. Itinerant missionaries were raised up in unprecedented numbers, and yet too slowly to meet the demand for them. New circuits, districts, and Conferences were formed; and still others, with more laborers, were required to gather the ripening harvest. Puritan New England needed Methodist missionary labor. Northward from New York, and into the Canadas, the itinerants stretched their line of service. They crossed the Alleghanies, and, through Kentucky and Tennessee, they took possession of the great North-west Territory. They spread out over the valley of the Mississippi, and southward through the Gulf States. The Methodist missionary presented himself to every new settlement, and was present to form the nucleus of a church. The whole country was mapped out by the pioneer itinerant; and the home missionary policy of Methodism furnished it with the ministrations and ordinances of Christianity. Such was its grand domestic missionary work for the first fifty years of its history. A more efficient system has never been in operation to accomplish evangelical ends. It had neither time nor men nor means to do more: this was what most needed to be done, and it was well done.

But here, as in England, the missionary spirit increased as its promptings were obeyed. It could not be satisfied or bound by a former measure of activity: it must invent some new scheme of doing good; and it devised a

collateral agent to co-operate with its regular system of church labor, to preach the gospel to other classes of subjects, hitherto unprovided for and unsaved. It organized the missionary society of the Methodist-Episcopal Church.

The organization of this society in New York in 1819, and its adoption as the society of the church by the General Conference in 1820, constituted an important event in the history of the church itself. Though the extent of its operations was quite limited for several years, and the receipts of its treasury, compared with the present, was then small, its formation had a moral influence from its beginning that may not be easily computed. It helped to cultivate and strengthen the evangelical spirit of Methodism. It gave comprehensiveness to the views of Christians respecting the great purposes of the gospel towards all classes of men. It called into exercise the benevolence, and increased the liberality, of the church; and, not least of its benefits, it showed that Methodism was keeping up with the requisitions of the age. If the number of souls that have been converted through the instrumentality of this society had not been a tithe what they have been, the influence it has had in cultivating the Christian graces of the church would have compensated a thousand fold for all the means furnished and the sacrifices made for the support of this missionary society.

The organization of this society has given to the great men that founded it a claim on the affection of the church that should never be forgotten; and the names of Nathan Bangs, Laban Clark, Freeborn Garrettson, Samuel Merwin, Joshua Soule, and a few others associated with them in that work, should be cherished as

long as this monument of their faith and spirit remains. To Dr. Nathan Bangs, probably more than to any other, is the church and the world indebted for the origin and early progress of this society. Dr. Strickland, in its history, says of him, "In addition to writing the constitution, the address, and circular, he was the author of every Annual Report, with but one exception, from the organization of the society down to the year 1841, — a period of twenty-one years. He filled the office of Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer for sixteen years, without salary or compensation of any kind, until his appointment to the first-named office by the General Conference of 1836. That he has contributed more than any other man to give character to our missionary operations, by the productions of his pen and his laborious personal efforts, is a well-authenticated fact, which the history of the church fully attests." The part that he took in this great work, while it was an evidence of the gracious qualities of his head and heart, contributed doubtless to make him afterwards so eminently progressive in all his views of Christian duty, and kept him in sympathy and favor with the advanced enterprises of the church, even to the time of his death, when more than fourscore years of age.

Several things went to show that the missionary spirit of the church was ready for the formation of such a society. The representative laymen of the church in New York, who formed its first board of managers, were, all of them, noble exponents of manly, intelligent, and earnest Methodism, and were good indices of the temper of the church in respect to the enterprise in which they engaged. The Philadelphia Conference formed another missionary society, almost simultaneously with

this, showing that it was not a local scheme. But the most decided evidence of the readiness of Methodism to take an advance step in missionary movements was the hearty and unanimous adoption of the society by the General Conference, in 1820. This official adoption was more than a mere sanction of such an organization: the report on the subject, prepared by Dr. Emory, was virtually an address to the church on the importance of the enterprise, and spoke the language of confidence in its success, of exhortation to the church to sustain it, and of hope in its grand results. The church proved that it was ready for co-operation, by a prompt response. In a short time every Conference formed an auxiliary society, and nearly every important individual church organized a branch; and funds began to flow into the treasury of the parent society from every direction. That all these things were the result of an intelligent evangelical impulse, and not the work of a temporary enthusiasm or spasm; that they arose from an impulse that had its root in true Christian principle, — is shown by the steady and continued increase of the receipts of the society to the present time. From *eight hundred and twenty-three* dollars in its first year, the receipts of the society have constantly increased, until the zeal and liberality of the church responded to its call last year with the contribution of *six hundred and fifty thousand* dollars.

The worth of this missionary organization is not to be computed solely by its financial exhibit; it must be measured by the work it has done, and by what it promises to do. What has it done as the agent of the church in disseminating the truths of the gospel,

and in bringing lost men to the knowledge of Christ? And what more does it promise to do? These are the fruits by which it shall be known.

From its beginning, the society directed its attention to the establishment of "missions to the English-speaking people in frontier settlements, and in destitute neighborhoods of both city and country throughout the land, wherever missionary labor promised to raise up living and self-supporting churches." It did not propose to "scatter water upon the ground, that could not be gathered up again," but by its aid to assist communities having peculiar necessities, and offering promising results to gospel ministrations. In this it has been remarkably successful; and there are many self-sustaining appointments in all the Conferences, that were once first designated as "missions," supported in whole or in part by this society. According to its last report (1866), "there are *fourteen hundred and eighteen* AMERICAN DOMESTIC MISSIONS fostered by this missionary society, and engaging the labors of at least an equal number of missionaries, who receive their pecuniary support in part or in whole from the missionary funds of the church." These include the Indian, Welsh, German, and Scandinavian missions of this country, as well as those speaking the English language.

The attention of the church through its missionary society was almost immediately directed to secure the conversion to Christianity of the Indian tribes; particularly of those living east of the Mississippi, within the United States and the Canadas. With the exception of the labors of Elliot, known as "the Apostle to the Indians," nearly two hundred years before, but little attention had been given to this aboriginal people from any

Christian sect, until this society began the work. They were so debased in their wickedness that the faith of the church could hardly suppose it possible for them to be reached by the gospel. Their nomadic life prevented them from adopting the habits of civilization; and, by the cupidity of the whites, they were fast being depleted in numbers, and becoming a nation of beastly drunkards, — degraded heathen communities, surrounded by Christianity. Yet to these desperately wretched subjects the newly-formed missionary society directed its labors. "How hopeless," says Dr. Bangs, "must their case have appeared to all who looked at them merely with the eye of human reason! But the faith of the Christian surveyed them with very different feelings, and prompted him to adopt measures for their melioration and salvation."

The results that followed the efforts to Christianize these aborigines seemed almost like moral miracles. The church that had begun the work with fear, and with some doubts of its success, were electrified with joy in hearing that whole tribes were embracing the gospel, and becoming worthy examples of its power to save them. In a few years there were over *seven thousand* among these tribes that had embraced Christianity. Bishop Hedding describes the effect of their conversion from what he saw in an official visit, in 1827, to a tribe of three hundred on Grape Island, in Bay Quinte. "The work of God among the Indians through that province was the greatest, all things considered, I ever saw among any people. Before their conversion they were almost universally drunkards, both men and women. They were miserably poor and filthy, living in wigwams, and getting but a scanty support by hunting and fishing.

But, when they were converted, they became sober and regular in their lives, and a devoutly religious people. They abandoned their old sinful habits, drunkenness and all, and became farmers, and learned mechanical trades. Their children were educated at the mission schools. A number of them became powerful and successful preachers; and altogether they became a respectable religious community."

It is a remarkable fact, that about the same time that American Methodism was beginning its first distinctive missionary work among these native tribes that were to human appearance so hopeless, and was laboring with such signal, almost miraculous, success in their conversion, the newly-formed Wesleyan Missionary Society was attempting, and with like success, the redemption of the South-Sea Islanders, heathens and cannibals, and was proving the power of the gospel to save the worst of men in the marvellous change it produced in these subjects, and in the number of the converts: this society was founding the Australian and Polynesian Wesleyan missions to the aborigines of the southern hemisphere. It is also a co-incident fact, that while the success of the Wesleyan missionaries among the natives of the South-Sea Islands was giving zeal and confidence to the church at home, and increased the missionary spirit in every Methodist society in the kingdom, the reports of what was done by missionary labors among the North-American Indians gave to the American church a hearty co-operating liberality in the support of these missions; and both Anglican and American churches were assured by their success that their new missionary movements were approved of God.

The missionary society of the Methodist-Episcopal Church directed its labors, for the first twelve years after its organization, chiefly to the Indian tribes, to introducing the gospel to the slaves of the South, and to the free people of color in different sections of the country. The success that attended its efforts, the continued increase of its receipts, and the enlarged views of duty suggested by what it had accomplished, prepared the society to attempt a foreign mission. Its first foreign missionary was Melville B. Cox; and his destined field, Liberia, was, in fact, an American colony. The unhealthiness of the climate of Liberia made the success of the mission difficult, and gave to the enthusiastic words of Cox a peculiar appropriateness in their application, "Though thousands fall, let not Africa be given up." The mission has prospered, notwithstanding its perilous climate; and Liberia, now an independent State, has also a Methodist Conference, with eighteen travelling and twenty-five local preachers, a missionary bishop, and nearly fifteen hundred members.

In 1835, the society began a mission in South America. About this time the attention of the church was aroused by a summons of a remarkable kind, — for missionaries to the Indians beyond the Rocky Mountains. It was a Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us." Four of the principal men of the Flat-head Indians had come three thousand miles to St. Louis, to learn respecting the Christians' God. The fact of their coming was made known to the American people through the press, and an intense interest awakened in their behalf. Appeals were made to the church to respond to this wonderful call; and Dr. Fisk, ready with a warm heart and earnest love for the missionary cause, asked "whether

there were any young ministers who were willing to devote themselves to this work." The missionary society assumed the responsibility of establishing a mission in Oregon. The "Flat-head Mission," as it was called, involved a large increase of the disbursements of the society, and the faith and liberality of the church were put to the test; but the interest created by this singularly providential call for missionary labor opened the heart and purse of the church, and the receipts of the society for the year 1834, when this mission was begun, were more than double the amount of the preceding year. Though only partially successful as the means of the conversion of the Indians for whom it was established, and considering the great outlay to maintain it, the Oregon mission did an important work in preparing the rapidly increasing population of the great Northwest of the United States on the Pacific coast with the initial Christian training for the States and Territories that they were so soon after to form, and in making Methodism the influential denomination of that region.

In 1836, the missionary society entered a new field of mission labor, and one that has proved the most abundant and rich in its fruits of any in which it has yet engaged, — a domestic mission to a people speaking a foreign language, — a mission to the German-American population of this country. The history of modern missions has not furnished another instance of equal success. Its beginning, so insignificant, like the mustard-seed, has become a great tree. In 1835, a young German student, William Nast, was brought to the knowledge of Christ at a Western camp-meeting. He immediately began, as an evangelist, to labor for the

conversion of his countrymen in Cincinnati, and became the founder of German Methodism in the United States. The missionary society assumed the direction and support of his work; and missions to the emigrants of Teutonic origin increased rapidly, and converts to the gospel from German Catholics and German Rationalists were greatly multiplied. In thirty years, since the first mission to the German-speaking Americans was begun, the increase has been marvellously great: its fruits are now organized into four distinct Conferences, including *seventeen* districts, *two hundred and forty-six* itinerant and *two hundred and fifty-five* local preachers, *three hundred and seventy-four* churches, and over *twenty thousand* members, with more than *four hundred and fifty* Sunday schools, and *twenty thousand* scholars.

The German missions in the United States have been developed in another and not less important missionary movement. The interest of the converts to Methodism in this country opened the way for its introduction into the German "fatherland." In 1849, the missionary society commenced a mission, led on by Dr. Jacoby, in Germany. This mission is now, says Dr. Stevens, "laying broad foundations for a European German Methodism. German societies and circuits, a German Conference, a German 'Book Concern,' and German periodicals, and a ministerial school, with all the other customary appliances of evangelical churches, have been established."

The commencement of missions to the Germans in the United States was naturally followed by missions to the Scandinavian emigrants in this country. Those to the Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes, begun in 1845, have been attended with signal success. From these nation-

alities, as the fruit of these missions, there are now in church fellowship *twenty-six* itinerants, and thirty local preachers, and over *two thousand* church members. This work has also become trans-Atlantic; and the missionary society is now supporting prosperous missions in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

In 1847, the missionary society began a mission in China. For several years the apparent fruit of its expenditure of men and means was inconsiderable; it required time and preparation for development. The later years of this mission, however, have been more encouraging. Its superintendent, Dr. Maclay, says, "The past year (1866) is the most successful one we have ever had in this mission: the net increase in church members is *fifty-five*, probationers *thirty-six*."

Another important mission was commenced in India, in 1856. It has already assumed the proportions of an Annual Conference, with three districts, and twenty-five preachers, and three hundred and twenty-three communicants. Nearly one-third of these communicants were added the last year.

It will thus be seen how extensively and widely the missionary society of the Methodist Church in the United States has been enlarging its operations, both in the domestic and foreign fields. From whatever standpoint we look at the missionary movements of American Methodism, they seem to have been a constituent part of Methodism itself, and an essential feature in its great success. For more than fifty years, — its first half-century, — its entire system was a domestic missionary scheme, and nearly every itinerant was a practical missionary. In directing its attention, more recently, in part to foreign fields, and in enlarging its

plans to comprehend universal evangelization, it has not ceased to look after the wants that are presented, and to embrace every opportunity to prosecute the work with vigor, at home. The events of the last few years have made new and large demands on its domestic efforts. The Great Rebellion has opened new fields, ripe or ripening for a full harvest from missionary labor. The emancipation of nearly four millions of slaves, and the necessity to supply them with the Word of Life by hands from which they would gladly receive it; the change of sentiment throughout the entire South, that has disposed a large part of its white population to desire affiliation with the Methodist-Episcopal Church; and the importance of raising up a church, loyal and homogeneous, throughout the whole country, — have called earnestly for the missionary spirit of the church to be comprehensive and liberal in its plans to send missionaries throughout the States lately in rebellion. The provision it has made for this emergent demand shows that Methodism retains its old domestic missionary zeal; that it is prepared for the work that Providence calls it to do. But a little more than two years since, and the close of the rebellion opened the whole southern portion of the United States as available important missionary ground. In that time, through the assistance of the missionary society, the entire region from Virginia to Texas has been organized into five departments, and embraces five Annual Conferences, with two hundred and fourteen preachers, and nearly forty thousand members. The evangelical spirit of the church was ready, with its practical measures, to enter in and occupy and cultivate this new and important field.

The healthy reaction from its missionary efforts has

proved a blessing to the church itself, and the intrinsic quality of the denomination has been improved by it, — intellectually, socially, and religiously. The children, who have been taught to contribute to, and to value, the spread of the gospel, have grown up with better views of Christianity itself, and of its importance to the race; and many of them, first giving themselves to Christ, have become individual preachers of righteousness, at home or abroad. The entire church has felt an increased spirit of liberality and love; and, what is most valuable of all other results, in praying for the diffusion of the gospel, and in giving of their substance to diffuse it, the whole church-membership have felt more of the power of the gospel to save themselves; and the missionary spirit of Methodism has made the Methodists a holier people.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LITERATURE OF METHODISM.

"What thou seest, write in a book."

WE must estimate the quality and value of the literature of Methodism, chiefly from its adaptation to further the great mission of Methodism itself, — to lead men to a knowledge of soul-conversion, and to cultivate and improve them in bringing forth the fruits of godliness. If it was best adapted to reveal to men the true character of God, and to awaken in them a vivid sense of their relationship individually to his government; if it led men to see their own true character in this relation as sinners, and brought them to repentance; if it showed them the way to the cross, and helped them to believe in Christ with a faith that justified the ungodly; if it instructed them in the various duties that appertained to their new religious state, and improved them in all their relations, social, domestic, civil, and ecclesiastical; if, with all these results, it gave them grander conceptions of God, and elevated them to a purer and more spiritual worship; if, in a word, it instructed, sanctified, and ennobled them; — if these have been the fruits of Methodist literature, then has it been such as we ought most highly to value, and such as we should most decidedly praise.

Because many who have attempted to pass judgment on it have not considered its adaptation to produce such results, they have failed to appreciate its excellence. Then, too, these depreciating critics have undervalued it because they did not like its style, however appropriate it might have been for those to whom it was addressed. They have rather asked if it commended itself to the taste of the learned, not considering that it was generally prepared to benefit the uneducated, and for the plain, common mind of the masses. They have estimated its merits more by its correspondence with classical standards than by its adaptation to interest, affect, and improve those who could best receive important truths when presented to them in the simplest didactic dress.

Whatever might have been the ability of John Wesley, who was the principal literary man of Methodism for many years of its early history, to adopt any other than the plain, preceptive style, he certainly adopted this from his conviction that it was the best to educate his people in religious truths. In his preface to his sermons, written but a few years before his death, he says, "I *could* even now write as floridly and rhetorically as even the admired Dr. B——; but I dare not. I dare no more write in a *fine style* than wear a fine coat. I should purposely decline, what many admire, a highly ornamental style. Let all who will admire the French frippery: I am still for plain, sound English." He understood the capacity and condition of the minds that he mostly addressed; and, avoiding the offensiveness of vulgarity on the one hand, he studiously avoided the ornate and florid style on the other. He chose rather the simplicity, purity, and strength of the Doric, to the

elaborate and profuse ornamentation of the Corinthian order.

The influence of Wesley's style of writing has evidently very much affected the general character of religious literature: it has certainly given direction to the style of Methodist literature. It was natural that his own immediate followers should imitate him; but, as the direct address of Methodist preaching wrought a material and general change in this respect in Protestant preaching, so Wesley's plain didactic style of writing, because of its effectiveness, and because his works were so extensively read and admired, became the popular style, and has been very commonly adopted as the best in the religious literature of the present day. His was the transition period from the heavy, long sentences of Tillotson and Barrow, or the nervous floridness of Massillon and Bourdaloue, to the chaste and simple conciseness of the preceptive style of William Jay, Robert Hall, and Richard Watson.

The literature of Methodism for half a century, both in Great Britain and America, with the exception of the writings of John Fletcher, and to a very limited extent of two or three others, was not only Wesleyan, but was the direct production of the Wesleys themselves. With the exceptions referred to, they were the only writers of the denomination. There was good reason for this: very few of the itinerants were capable of writing. They had been introduced into the ministry without the previous education that would have fitted them for authors, and their duties as itinerants allowed them no opportunity or time to prepare for such work. A few of them, by great diligence and study, became fair biblical scholars; but none of them appear to have attained

any note as authors. Whatever instruction, therefore, Methodists received through the press from their own teachers, came directly from Wesley's own pen. But they were not, on that account, left without an abundant supply of Methodist literature, and of the best kind. No man ever valued more the power of the press than John Wesley, and no one ever used it more industriously to direct its power for religious ends. He believed that the invention of printing was designed by God to be a mighty agent to give the knowledge of God to the race; and that next to preaching, if not equal to it, printing should be made the instrument of evangelization to the world.

Wesley was endowed with every requisite gift to make the press available to aid him in raising up a great religious people. He was a scholar of the first class, not merely because he had passed through a university, but because he was a student from his early childhood to his death. His resources for intellectual cultivation were in his indefatigable industry and perseverance. Notwithstanding his severe itinerant labors, his care of all his societies and lay preachers, and the great demands that were made on his attention and time, he was always a student; and he not only read at his ease, but at his meals, and when he was riding, and in his walks. Thus he had at his command all the information that he required, and that his disciplined mind was prepared to throw out with his ready pen.

The number of Wesley's literary productions seem almost incredible, and indicate his industry, and the facility with which he wrote. Most eminent literary men rely for fame on some few works, to which they devote years of patient labor, and usually on some sub-

ject to which their thoughts have been exclusively directed. Wesley did not write for fame, but to do good; and his ever-accumulating resources furnished him with the material to write on every variety of subject that was required. He translated, compiled, and abridged many great productions, that had each been the life-work of their authors. He was the original author of a large number of standard works; of sermons; "Notes on the New and the Old Testament;" "An Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, chiefly in defence of Methodism;" "A Treatise on Original Sin." His "Journals," that appeared in twenty parts, were, without exception, the finest specimen in style of any similar work that was ever written. As Dr. Stevens says, "For more than half a century they keep us, not only weekly, but almost daily, in the company of the great man, in his travels, his studies, and his public labors." He prepared a "History of England," and a "History of the Church," each in four volumes; and a "Compendium of Natural Philosophy," in five. He prepared a variety of text-books for his school at Kingswood. He published a "Christian Library" of fifty volumes, "consisting of abridgments of the choicest works of practical divinity." He began, in 1778, "The Arminian Magazine." It was one of the first publications of this class of religious periodicals, that have since become so common and popular in the Protestant world: it is now the oldest publication of the kind in any land. He wrote lyrics for his people to sing; and, though less noted as a sacred poet than his brother Charles, he showed that he had fellowship with the Muse, and some of his hymns are ranked among the finest that were ever written. Among the most useful, though less elaborate, of his

writings, were his tract publications. With a versatility and practical skill characteristic of the man, Wesley encouraged the lower and poorer classes to cultivate a taste for reading, and prepared for them tracts on subjects that would interest them, and in a style that would secure their attention; and he distributed them on terms that made them available to all. Their themes were such as could not fail to improve the moral qualities of those who read them. He says, "Two and forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny a piece, and afterward several larger. Some of them had such a sale as I never thought of." He was the father of the modern extensive system of tract distribution. He was not content with writing and publishing books and tracts; he put in operation a thoroughly organized system for their circulation. Every itinerant was an industrious agent for their distribution. We have said that the lay preachers were not generally qualified to write books; but they were every one of them qualified to circulate them, and Wesley's command, "Circulate the books," they zealously obeyed. He enjoined on them, "See that every society is supplied with books, some of which ought to be in every house." — "Leave no stone unturned in this work." Every lay preacher was an efficient colporteur, and the organized itinerancy of Wesleyanism was the most complete scheme for the universal diffusion of cheap religious literature that was ever devised.

The results from the Herculean literary labors of John Wesley, aided by the co-operation of his preachers in the dissemination of his writings, were marvellous

and good. The reading taste of the masses was improved, their intelligence and their moral state improved; and, with the direct preaching of the gospel, Wesley's religious literature became a savour of life unto life to thousands of the people in England and America.

Charles Wesley, the other literary man of early Methodism, though not inferior to his brother as a classical scholar, had but a limited reputation as a prose writer. He is known as the lyric poet of Methodism, and, with hardly a rival, he is esteemed the best hymnist the world has ever produced.

It seems to be a remarkable intervention of Providence, that in the great reformation of the eighteenth century,—the Methodistic movement, introducing a new epoch of spiritual Christianity,—the men who were its chief agents should have been each so specially fitted for the particular work he had to do, and to be helpers together of each other in the general work. Charles Wesley was as much ordained of God to be the hymnist of Methodism as John Wesley was to be its administrator. If John instructed and established Methodists more by his printed sermons, Charles inspired them more by his spiritual lyrics. This union of diversity of gifts has been the strength and glory of Methodism. Martin Luther wrote a few hymns, and only a few, and they had the stately sternness of the polemic: had his beloved Melancthon given to him and the Lutheran reformation such a spiritual, devotional collection of sacred songs as Charles Wesley gave to the Wesleyan Reformation, and had the heart of all Germany been made to glow with the inspiration of such psalmody, then would the doctrine of justification of faith — the

great tenet of Luther's Reformation — have been made a sanctifying reality to Luther's converts, and pope and cardinals, legates and priests, emperors and kings, would have labored and persecuted in vain to arrest the onward march of that reformation.

Charles Wesley wrote his lyrics with as great facility as his brother wrote prose; his whole soul was filled with a poetic genius. More than six hundred in the Wesleyan hymn-book are from his pen. He is reported to have written in all more than six thousand. His versatility was as great as his industry. He wrote on every subject by which the emotions of the heart could be moved in song. His devotional hymns are exceedingly comprehensive and varied in their topics. It has been often said, that every doctrine of Holy Scripture was taught in his songs, and that Methodists were as well instructed in the pure truths of the Bible while singing Charles Wesley's hymns as in reading John Wesley's sermons. There was no element of human experience which he did not represent, and with a clearness and vividness that found an echoing response in the personal consciousness of many hearts. Dr. Tefft has truly said, "The interior life of man, under all circumstances and in every condition, seems to have been open to him; and he entered in, seeking out all the wants and woes, all the griefs and fears, all the hates and ills, all the sorrows, loves, and joys, for the purpose of his sacred verse." But the noblest quality of Charles Wesley's hymns was his vivid, earnest, and assuring grasp of the efficiency and fulness of the gospel to meet every want of the sinner's state: in this he excels all others. To him the atonement, with its full provisions, is not a mere possibility, — a something to be sought;

but a reality already enjoyed. Here is his great superiority over Watts. Watts sung, —

> "*Could* we but climb where Moses stood,
> And view the landscape o'er."

Charles Wesley sung, —

> "The promised land from Pisgah's top
> I *now* exult to see."

The literary character of Charles Wesley's lyrics are confessed to be almost beyond criticism. It is a notable fact, that, in the modern hymn-books of the various denominations of Protestants, his hymns form no inconsiderable part of these collections. In the few instances where presumption has dared to alter the original of his hymns, it has marred, if not spoiled, the harmony and sentiment of the author's verse. Dr. Stevens has well said, "No man ever surpassed Charles Wesley in the harmonies of language. To him it was a diapason. He never seems to labor in his poetic compositions. The reader feels that they were necessary utterances of a heart palpitating with emotion and music. No words seem to be put in for effect; but effective phrases, brief, surprising, incapable of improvement, are continually and spontaneously occuring, 'like lightning,' says Montgomery, 'revealing for a moment the whole hemisphere.' His language is never tumid; the most and least cultivated minds appreciate him with surprising delight; his metaphors, abundant and vivid, are seldom far-fetched or strained, his rhymes seldom or never constrained. His style is throughout severely pure."

John Wesley, who was always a severe critic, gives his opinion of the literary merit of his brother's hymns in

his preface to "A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists," that "in these hymns there are no doggerel, no botches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble expletives. Here is nothing turgid or bombastic on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other. Here are no cant expressions, no words without meaning. Here are (allow me to say) the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the English language, and, at the same time, the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity."

Who shall measure the influence that Charles Wesley's lyrics have had in forming Methodism, in breathing into it a spiritual life, and in diffusing it over the world; for to every Methodist, and, in fact, to all Protestantism, his hymns are as familiar as household words. Nor are they unused. John Wesley knew the power of sacred song to cultivate a pure devotion in his followers, and took great pains to learn all his people to sing. He said, in his "Minutes of Conference," "exhort every one in the congregation to sing." The Methodist "Discipline" has said the same, and Methodists have been educated to sing as much as to pray. Charles Wesley's hymns have been their standard spiritual songs. This lyrical literature has regulated and inspired the experiences of all Methodists: it has been the fire and the hammer to the hard heart of the sinner. The penitent has been taught to sing, "His blood availed for me;" and he has quickly responded with joy, "My God is reconciled." The faith of the believer has been strengthened while he has sung, "O glorious hope of perfect love!" and the dying saint has found his passage from earth made easy as he repeated, "With Him I on Zion shall stand." In the class-meeting, the love-feast, the social prayer-meeting,

and the public congregation; in the chamber of the sick, and in the cell of the prisoner, and around the family altar; wherever and whenever the soul has sought to be brought near to God, and to find the assuring consciousness of the divine presence, — Charles Wesley's hymns have proved, to the sincere heart-worshipper, the ladder of the patriarch, opening to him a communication between earth and heaven.

The next author in historical order, whose writings were destined to have a controlling influence on the character of Methodism, was John Fletcher of Madeley. It is remarkable that as devout and holy a man as ever called himself a Methodist should become its most noted and successful controversialist; and it is not less remarkable that Providence furnished such a man, and the only one with qualifications exactly required to defend the doctrines of Arminians, just when they most needed his defence, and when they were the most severely assailed. The "Calvinistic controversy," that began about 1770, was the most generally exciting polemical contest in which Methodism has been engaged. And the Arminian doctrines, as distinguished from Calvinism, were then so ably defended and sustained, that there has been but little need of a subsequent defence. Indeed, so effectually were the obnoxious features of the Geneva doctrines exposed and refuted, that their nominal adherents have ceased to present them in their former rank objectional forms.

Fletcher, the Methodist champion in this controversy, had the gifts that made him a full match for all his opponents. He had studied Calvinism under the teachings of its ablest advocates, and had rejected it and openly renounced it from the clearest convictions of his

judgment that it was contrary to the word of God. No man could have defended Methodism with an honest conscience better than Fletcher. His devout life and amiable temper preserved him from the acrimonious spirit that is so often found in doctrinal controversies. Southey says of him, "No age or country ever produced a man of more fervent piety or more perfect charity. No church ever possessed a more apostolic minister." And Isaac Taylor says, "The Methodism of Fletcher was Christianity as little lowered by admixtures of human infirmity as we may hope to find anywhere on earth." Dr. Tefft says, "As a controversialist, Mr. Fletcher had the double power of laying an antagonist at his feet by the force of his great learning and resistless logic, and then raising him to self-respect, and to a respect for the system assaulted, by the power of a beautiful charity that never failed."

Fletcher wrote a few sermons, "A Portrait of the Character of St. Paul," and some fugitive pieces. But his great work was his "Checks to Antinomianism." These "Checks" appeared at various times in pamphlets, as the various phases of the controversy required; and they embraced the discussion of all the collateral questions arising out of the main one, — the Calvinist doctrine of the divine decrees. They were so able, scriptural, and irrefutable, that they became a complete hand-book for every Methodist, and a complete armory of defence against all assailants of the doctrines of free will, free grace, and Christian perfection.

Fletcher's writings, as they have superseded the necessity of many other works on the same subjects, have largely contributed to make the denomination of one mind respecting these subjects all over the world. They

availed for all use. The devout spirit that ran through them made them helpful in devotion. Their high standard of Christian experience made them aids to faith in the attainment of "perfect love." Their clear vindication of the personal responsibility of every man, and of the freeness and gracious aid of the gospel to save men, left every one without excuse in the neglect of his salvation; and they gave a complete equipment with which to assail and to overthrow the various dogmas of Calvinism. Though they are less in demand as controversial writings than in former days, "they are," says Dr. Stevens, "read more to-day than they were during the excitement of the controversy. Every Methodist preacher is supposed to read them as an indispensable part of his theological studies; and they are found at all parts of the globe whither Methodist preachers have borne the cross."

Wesley's cheap literature created a taste for reading throughout all his societies; and the improved social and educational status of his people prepared them to desire and to require more elaborate works. The great law, so universal, that demand will create supply, applied to this; and we find that henceforth the literature of Methodism became more abundant and various. It is hardly consistent with the design of this work to speak of all the different Methodist writers and their productions that have appeared. Among the most noted of them was Joseph Benson. He wrote biographies, and was, for many years, editor of the "Arminian Magazine," and denominational books; but his chief literary work was his "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures." It was literally an exposition and practical application of the sacred text. It soon became the family book of Meth-

odism. It is still published in a variety of forms, and is more used by English Wesleyans than any other commentary.

Following Benson, and more renowned for his erudition, was Dr. Adam Clarke. He furnished Methodism with another "Commentary." He was regarded as the most learned man of the Wesleyans, and his work abounds with evidence of his research and culture. Dr. Tefft says that his commentary "concentrates the substance of all available knowledge to the single purpose of illustrating and confirming the truths of revelation."

From the many other men, more or less distinguished as writers among the Wesleyans, we must be content with naming only Richard Watson. Though he ranked among the first of his brethren as a preacher and a platform speaker, and as a leading executive man in sustaining and directing the missionary schemes of British Methodism, he was deservedly considered preeminent among them for the quality of his literary productions. His printed sermons have no superiors in the English language. In his "Theological Institutes," he has given to the church a complete body of divinity, an irrefutable defence of Methodism, a full text-book on Arminian doctrines, and a recognized standard in every itinerant's course of study. Dr. Stevens says, in reference to his position in Methodism, "It is, perhaps, not too much to say, that no superior mind has yet been given to its British ministry." We have introduced the names of these men, about whom we have written, as the literary men of English Methodism, because their influence in this character has been very widely felt both in England and America, and especially

because in this character they have been better known in this country than any others. If we were to give a list of scores of others who have contributed, or are now contributing, to elevate the intellectual and religious state of Great Britain by their writings, it would be found that Methodist authors would not suffer by a comparison with the writers of any other denomination in the kingdom, either in the variety or quality of their works.

The literature of American Methodism, down perhaps to 1820, was almost exclusively Anglican. There were good reasons for this. Wesley, for nearly half that time, was the recognized head of the American societies, and he supplied them with all the religious reading they required, — of the best quality, and such as was best adapted to their wants. The duties, literary qualifications, and circumstances of the early American itinerants made it almost impossible for them to become authors. Their work was to preach, not to write: they were preparing a people to appreciate and to demand books. The poverty and early habits of most Methodists produced in them but little taste for reading: the little they had, needed to be stimulated. Still the itinerants did not lightly esteem the importance of good religious literature as an auxiliary to their preaching. They were the sons of Wesley; and they heartily complied with his injunction, "Circulate the books." For many years the most of these books were issued from his "Book Concern" in England; and the supply in this country was necessarily small, and the variety limited. Yet the preachers obtained them, carried them around with them in their saddle-bags, and every Meth-

odist had an opportunity to purchase portions, at least, of Wesley's sermons, Fletcher's "Checks," Methodist hymn-books, or smaller works on Christian experience, or biographies. These works became the staple literature of Methodism. Like the early lay preachers of England, American itinerants distributed, but did not write, books.

When Methodism as well as the State, in this country, became independent of England, a necessity arose for an independent publication of its literature. With its accustomed readiness to adopt every practical expedient to religiously instruct and save the people, it laid the foundations of its great Book Concern in 1789, and appointed one of its ministers, John Dickens, the book-steward. It began with a small, borrowed capital, — only six hundred dollars; and its entire catalogue of books, for two or three years, numbered only six, embracing the "Methodist Discipline" and "Hymn Book." The growth of this church publishing house was not very rapid: it did not print its own books until thirty-five years after its establishment. Meanwhile, the list of its publications had moderately increased, and its standard works were mostly by English authors. After this time it began to assume an independence of foreign authorship, and its publications became more American; and American Methodists began to be writers. In 1818, it commenced the publication of its first periodical, — "The Methodist Magazine," — after the style of Wesley's "Arminian Magazine." To this, it soon added a monthly, — "The Youth's Instructor." In 1826, it issued the first number of its great weekly, — "The Christian Advocate and Journal;" and in a short time the subscribers to "The Advocate" reached the great number of thirty thousand, — more than those of any

other paper published in the United States. The supply of Methodist books increased the demand of the people for them, and also, by its profits, provided the means to furnish them. In those days, every Methodist minister was an active, accredited agent and salesman of the publications of the Book Concern. The standard works of the Wesleys, Fletcher, Benson, Clarke, and Watson, and the fugitive productions of Methodist writers of less note, found their way into almost every Methodist household.

The Book Concern, with vastly increased resources to do its work, is at present divided into an Eastern and Western Branch, with a depository in seven of the principal cities of the country. Its periodical publications have increased to fifteen. It publishes about nine hundred different kinds of tracts; fifteen hundred kinds of Sunday-school books; and nearly five hundred of what it calls "General Catalogue Volumes," on a great variety of subjects, such as the wants and taste of the church require, some of them of considerable literary merit.

This statement of the extent and character of the publications of the Methodist Book Concern will enable us to determine, approximately, how far the Methodist people have been supplied with Methodist literature; for, until quite recently, the circulation of this kind of literature, except by the issues of this church agency, has been comparatively very small. It is not difficult to see how the custom obtained of confining such publications to the "Concern." The restrictive regulations of Mr. Wesley, afterwards adopted by the General Conference of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, established a limited censorship over the issue of all books or

pamphlets by Methodist ministers on their own account, and required the consent of Conference for their publication. As this consent was a virtual order for them to be published by the "official press," they naturally took that direction. Whatever, therefore, did not have the imprint of church authority was regarded with suspicion, if it was not actually treated by Methodists as "contraband."

It is easily seen that it was necessary, in the early period of Methodism, to unite all the patronage of Methodists in one publishing institution, in order to furnish sufficient means to supply the church with religious reading of the Wesleyan type. Nor can it be doubted that the Methodist Book Concern, as it has been conducted, has been instrumental in accomplishing much good. It has grown to be the "largest religious publishing house in the world." But a more enlightened and liberal sentiment has led many intelligent Methodists to inquire whether the literature of Methodism would not, on the whole, be improved in its quality, and be more widely diffused, if it were less dependent on an almost exclusive medium of circulation, and if it were to be spread abroad through the land by the enterprise and impulse of a healthy competition. This inquiry has led to a material change in the mode of publication; and within a few years the writings of some of the best Methodist authors have been widely circulated through some other avenue than the Book Concern.

The most popular kind of literature is the periodical. This statement is as true in respect to that which is religious, as to that which is secular. The number of periodicals of various kinds that are issued from the

official press of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, from the critical "Quarterly Review" to the small "Sunday-school Advocate," or "Good News," is almost incredibly great. The aggregate regular issues of the whole, most of which are large weeklies, are not less than *five hundred thousand.* The same enlightened views that have led to the publication of some of the book literature of Methodism, through other channels than the Book Concern, have led also to an independent establishment of some of the best periodicals; and there are now not less than seven weeklies of this class well sustained by the patronage of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. When to all these we add the periodical publications of the Methodist Church South, and of all the other smaller denominations of Methodists in the United States and British America, we find that the aggregate publications of different kinds of the Methodist weekly periodical press in North America are thirty-three, and their issues not less than two hundred and fifty thousand, and probably more than three times the number of similar publications from the press of any other denomination in the country. Who can estimate the vast influence of all this amount of religious reading in increasing the intelligence, regulating the lives, and improving the piety of American Methodists.

That the Methodist Book Concern has done so much, and done it so well, to furnish a healthy religious literature for the church, may make it seem ungenerous in us to say that it might have done more, but for some disadvantages with which it has had to contend. Yet this is nevertheless true. It has been required to furnish an annual bonus out of its profits for objects not strictly embraced in the design of the institution. Its

real design *should be* to circulate the words of truth in their most attractive and useful form, and to the greatest possible extent; and nothing should be allowed in any way to embarrass it in this design. Yet, from the hour of its establishment, it has been expected to make annual dividends for the support of superannuated preachers, and, more recently, to pay the salaries of the bishops of the church. When the time comes, which must be soon, that the self-respect of the largest and wealthiest Protestant Church on the continent insists that its episcopacy shall be supported in a more consistent way than by the profits of the sales of a book-store; and when the Book Concern shall be left free to use all its resources in improving the quality of its publications, and in giving them the widest possible diffusion, then will it be less embarrassed, and its ability will be greatly increased to meet the imperative demands of Methodism in respect to the character, the variety, and the circulation of its literature.

Most of the literary men in American Methodism are now living: it would not be proper, therefore, to say much in praise of their individual productions. It will not be out of place, however, to speak of the wide range of their subjects, and the general superior quality of their writings. They have written histories and philosophies; some of the best text-books for colleges and common schools are from their pen; they have written biographies, and able expositions of the Scriptures; their works on purely theological subjects are numerous; and they have been prolific in writings to cultivate religious devotion, and to lead the reader to a higher state of Christian experience. They are not inferior, as a class, to the writers in any other American church.

Of the men who have contributed to increase the literary treasures of American Methodism, and who have fallen asleep, we will speak of but two. We name Asbury first, not because his "Journals" are entitled to a very high rank as literary compositions, but because, while travelling from one end of the continent to the other, he found time, through a series of years, to note the events of Methodist history better than any other hand has done it, and because he who had the best opportunity to know what to write has done it, though with plainness, with unquestionable faithfulness. His "Journals" are our best authority for the events in American Methodism from the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, in 1784, to the organization of its delegated General Conference, in 1812. He wrote also most of the obituaries in the older "Minutes" of the Conferences, and he has thus preserved for us the strong points in the characters of many of the fathers. "As biographical sketches they are models of excellence."

Dr. Nathan Bangs deserves to be ranked as the most industrious and influential writer among American Methodists; certainly, among those who are not now living. There was always a practical and sincere aim in his productions that commended them to the respectful attention of all who perused them. He addressed the church, as editor of its great weekly periodical, in behalf of its great enterprises for evangelization more than any other man, and for many years exerted an influence, through his pen, greater than any other Methodist writer. His great literary work was his "History of the Methodist-Episcopal Church," in four volumes. Dr. Stevens, his biographer, says of it, "It

was a work for the times, if not for all times; and of him, "As a historian of the church he will be immortal. He must forever be acknowledged as the principal authority of all future historical writers on American Methodism; and, if his volumes ever cease to be the popular manual of our history, his name must nevertheless incessantly recur as an authority in the marginal acknowledgments of writers who may supersede him." Though not an "artistic work," it is full of well-authenticated historical facts and documents, faithfully given, without ornamentation; and his reflections on the various phases of Methodism, as time and circumstances developed them, show that he comprehended them with the intelligence and judgment of a sound Christian philosopher.

The greatest praise that can be given the literature of Methodism, is, that its chief object has been to instruct its readers in the evangelical and experimental truths of Christianity. This was almost the exclusive design of the writings of John and Charles Wesley, and of such men as Fletcher, Benson, Clarke, and Watson among the Wesleyans, and of the greater part of American Methodist writers; and, whether their writings have been prose or lyric, expository or polemical, whether they have been in sermons or biographies, they have had one great design apparent; it was that men might have clearer views of the atonement, and its necessity and benefits, and be brought individually to prove, by a conscious certainty in their own experience, that it was the power of God unto salvation.

CHAPTER XX.

METHODISM, AND THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF THE YOUNG.

"Take this child away, and nurse it for me; and I will give thee thy wages."

THE most promising feature of Protestantism in this day is, that it employs such liberal means to give religious instruction to the young; particularly that it seeks directly by this instruction to lead the young to a personal knowledge of the converting power of the gospel. Every evangelical church is using some means to save the young.

When Methodism began, the faith of the church embraced but vaguely the truth uttered by Peter on the day of Pentecost, "The promise is unto your children." It agreed more with the doubt and impatience of the disciples who forbade parents to bring their young children to Christ: it did not embrace the possibility, or at least not the importance, of the conversion of children. The most that the Christian church then taught was, in general, that the young should be instructed in what were held to be the doctrines of the Bible, and in their obligations to lead a moral life. The children, even of religious parents were very rarely encouraged or assisted to seek through Christ the pardon of their sins; for it was an experience that the parents themselves hardly

dared profess. If a youth, led by the spirit and word of God, was made the gracious subject of this pardon, and especially if he was disposed to profess it publicly, the reality of his conversion was treated with such suspicion that he received no encouragement to avow it; and the distrust that was shown of his desire to assume the Christian name had a chilling, if not a killing, influence on his purpose to live godly. When Methodism began, it found existing among Christians a common sentiment, that, when one was old enough to assume the duties and responsibilities of a citizen, it was time enough for him to take upon him the obligations of the Christian profession. In fact, it was generally believed that children and youth should be taught the provisions of the gospel, but that the promise of its application to them was afar off. The result of such teaching was, that the conversions of children were of very rare occurrence. The church, in any organized way at least, employed no direct means of obeying the Saviour's command, "Feed my lambs."

This treatment of the young, in respect to their conversion, was but a natural corollary of the way in which most professed Christians treated themselves. They knew but little, at best, of the renewing grace of Christ: surely they would not expect their children to know it. When, therefore, Methodism made known to them that Christ had power on earth to forgive their sins, it would naturally follow that they would care for the salvation of their children. It became in this way a double evangelist, and said as positively, in the name of Christ, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," as it said to all, "Ye must be born again." In saying that the revival in the eighteenth century, of a religious life in

Christianity, began with Methodism, we say also that the present sentiment of the church, and its direct efforts for the salvation of the young, originated mainly in this Methodistic movement; and that, while Methodism gave to the church a religious experience that it had not known, it added several years, in the aggregate, of religious life to the church, by bringing into it members at an earlier age. These younger members, too, were in the formative, developing period, — the most important and valuable of any period in personal history.

The mother of the Wesleys appears to have been a very remarkable woman. Not the least remarkable feature in her life was the strict religious training that she gave her children. She was, in this respect, an exception to most of the women of her day. Yet, careful as she was in the instruction of her family in religious truth, and watchful as she was over their morals, and exemplary as she was in leading them to observe the forms of religion, and though she encouraged them in their desires to live godly lives, she was hardly prepared, by an assurance of the renewing grace of Christ in her own heart, to instruct them fully in the experience of the new birth. In no other way, than from this view of her own religious state, can we account for the fact, that, while Wesley was striving for years to obtain an assurance of his acceptance with God, his godly mother could not, or did not, fully reveal to him the true way of obtaining it. Yet Susannah Wesley was one of the most extraordinary women that ever lived.

His early religious instruction from his mother would lead John Wesley to appreciate the importance of similar instruction to all children. Her prayers and counsels and reproofs, her godly character, and the encour-

agement she gave him to obey every good religious impulse, followed him from the rectory of Epworth throughout his whole life; and, when he was made to understand more fully the way of salvation than she had taught him, and he began to preach the power of Christ to save all men, and he repeated the words of Peter to the multitude, "The promise is unto you," he would certainly add, "and unto your children." It was in this way that he began to preach, and that he continued to preach for over fifty years, and that he taught all his assistants to preach.

One of the first instructions that Wesley gave his lay helpers was, that they should assiduously seek the salvation of the young. In his large "Minutes," — the law of his societies, — in reply to the question, "What shall be done for the rising generation?" he said, "Unless we take care of this, the present revival will last only the age of a man. Let him who is zealous for God and the souls of men begin anew. Where there are ten children in a society, meet them at least an hour every week. Talk with them every time you see any at home. Pray in earnest for them." He prepared "Instructions for Children," — the design of which were to teach them Scripture truths and moral duties; but especially to encourage them early to seek Christ as their Saviour. He said to his lay preachers, "When there are such as are truly awakened, admit them to the societies." It was not long before many serious, praying youth were in these societies; and, in some cases, so many that they were put into juvenile classes, with a pious and intelligent woman as their leader. Some of his most efficient lay preachers were converted when they were children, and became exhorters or local

preachers when not more than sixteen years of age. He believed, what was then regarded by most Christians as a questionable doctrine, that "the young are more readily affected by the truths of religion, and when they grow up become more intelligent and godly Christians, than those who come to mature life before they embrace Christ." His views of the importance of the conversion of children were embraced by all his preachers and people.

The introduction of Sunday schools, now the popular and successful method of all churches for the religious training of the young, transpired some years after Wesley had given specific instructions to all his itinerants to give diligence and care in training the children; and the Sunday school, if not in form, in spirit at least, prevailed throughout the Wesleyan societies. In some instances it had both form and spirit. Dr. Stevens says, "As early as 1769, a young Methodist, Hannah Ball, established a Sunday school in Wycombe, England, and was instrumental in training many children in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures." Another Methodist woman, who became afterward the wife of Samuel Bradburn, a distinguished Wesleyan itinerant, had the honor of suggesting to Robert Raikes the establishment of the first Sunday school in Gloucester, and of being his co-laborer in founding that school, the fame of which has spread throughout the world.

We have before alluded to the fact, that, in 1784, Wesley provided for the independent organization of Methodism in America, and also for the legal permanent establishment of Wesleyanism in England, after his death. At the close of this year, he did what may be called the third great act of his old age, and through

his official journal, the "Arminian Magazine," indorsed and commended Sunday schools for the adoption of his societies. It shows that, though he had passed fourscore, he still retained with vigor that faculty for which he had always been distinguished, — an ability to see the practical advantages of such a religious enterprise; and that he still retained his evangelical love for any and every measure that would further the desire of his heart, and save the young.

Wesley's counsel was readily followed by his people; and in a short time Sunday schools were organized in many of his societies, the itinerants introducing them, and devoted men and women offered their services gratuitously as teachers. Some of these schools numbered from five to eight hundred scholars. Mr. Wesley says that there were at Bolton five hundred and fifty. "Such an army of them got about me, when I came out of the chapel, that I could hardly disengage myself from them," — a good proof that they knew the love and interest he had for them. He says again, "I find these Sunday schools springing up wherever I go; perhaps God may have a deeper end therein than men are aware of." To one of his preachers he says, as if inspired by a prophetic vision, "It seems these [Sunday schools] will be one great means of reviving religion throughout the nation." And to another he writes, "This is one of the best institutions which has been seen in Europe for some centuries."

Methodism led the van in introducing Sunday schools into England, especially in giving to them an evangelical mission. They were originally established by Raikes for the purpose of gathering together the vagrant children of the city, in order to teach them to read, and to

take them to the church on Sundays. The Methodists, wherever they established them, made them the means of direct religious instruction, having an immediate design to teach the children the Scriptures, and to lead them to the knowledge of Christ. As a people, they were well prepared to engage in such a movement. They had become proverbial for the great interest they had always evinced for the salvation of the young, and this interest now disposed them to appreciate an institution whose object corresponded with their desires. The practical economy of Methodism, with an itinerant connectional supervision of all its societies, made it easy to introduce these schools generally throughout the connection. Its members were educated as religious laborers, by their experience in the class and prayer-meeting services; and thus they were qualified to enter with facility on the duties of the new institution. What was of more value than all other qualifications, Methodists possessed a missionary spirit, and an experimental knowledge of divine things, that inclined them to engage in the work, and prepared them to do it in a way that would make Sunday schools a means for the conversion of the children, and a real nursery of the church.

American Methodism pursued the same course, in respect to the religious education and the salvation of the young, that the Wesleyan body did in England. It inserted in its "Discipline" the same rules that Wesley had enjoined on his preachers, and required every itinerant to converse with the children in respect to their religious state, to gather the awakened ones into societies, and to pray for them. These rules were strictly observed; and, wherever the itinerants went, every child, as well as

every adult, expected to be conversed with, and exhorted to become a true Christian. On this account the younger portions of a household, where Methodist preachers went, were the most ready to welcome and serve them; nor were any class more generally benefited by their visits than the children. They were made the subjects of special prayer at the family altar; they were encouraged to attend the class-meetings, and their names were enrolled on the class-books; and they were spoken to and counselled in regard to their religious life. Hundreds and thousands of the young became Christians under the influence of Methodist teaching, and grew up to be distinguished as ministers and members of the church.

The itinerant life of the Methodist ministry, especially in its earlier period, made it difficult to give that systematic attention to the religious training of the young that it would have done in a more local or settled ministry; but, with all this disadvantage, there were no men who were more industrious and zealous than they in fulfilling the command of Christ to "feed the lambs." Asbury, the pattern pastor as well as bishop, was noted for his fidelity in teaching the children. He may be called the founder of Sunday schools in America; for in 1786, long before they were generally introduced in this country, he established one in Hanover County, Va., in the house of Thomas Cranshaw; and it was not without good fruit. John Charleston was converted in that school, and became a useful minister in the Methodist church.

Methodism has an honorable record in the history of Sunday schools in this country. As early as 1796, the "Discipline" of the church said, "Let us labor, as

the heart and soul of one man, to establish Sunday schools in or near the place of public worship." Asbury, in his notes on this section of the "Discipline," says, "Alas! the great difficulty lies in finding men and women of genuine piety as instructors. Let us, however, endeavor to supply these *spiritual* defects. Let us follow the directions of this section, and we shall meet many in the day of judgment who will acknowledge, before the great judge and an assembled universe, that their first desires after Christ and salvation were received in their younger years by our instrumentality."

Asbury impressed his sentiments respecting Sunday schools on all his preachers, and they cheerfully followed his example in founding and supporting them. But the sparsely settled circuits, and the comparatively infrequent visits of the itinerants at the same place, prevented the establishment of these schools, except in a few places; and Methodist Sunday schools were not generally introduced in this country for many years after the "Discipline" first recommended them. Their number, however, increased from year to year; and, although no denominational organization was formed to encourage and aid them with a literature appropriate to their wants until 1827, a Sunday school had at that time become an almost universal accompaniment of every Methodist church.

In 1827 the Methodist Sunday-school Union was formed; and the various Conferences and societies of the church responded to the call to organize auxiliaries to it, and to contribute to its funds to provide a literature such as the wants of the schools required. The Book Concern then began to turn its attention to the work

of furnishing text-books and religious reading appropriate for young readers, and an increased interest was created throughout the church respecting the religious education of the young. Dr. Bangs says, "Never did an institution go into operation under more favorable circumstances, or was hailed with more universal joy, than the Sunday-school Union of the Methodist-Episcopal Church."

The organization of these collateral or auxiliary institutions of the church, — the Sunday schools, — and of the society to give them efficiency, contributed greatly to aid Methodism in its efforts to improve the religious state of the young. The press, at the present time not inferior to any other agency except the pulpit for the evangelization of men, has made the Sunday school attractive by its issues of instructive and entertaining religious books and periodicals. A literature has been prepared and furnished, adapted to the varieties of age and attainments of both scholars and teachers. The issuing of these works became a special department of the Book Concern; and the talents of some of the ablest men of the church, adapted to it, were employed to prepare Sunday-school publications. Other denominations engaged in the same work; and many private publishing houses of the country, not less enterprising than the denominational ones, rivalled each other in furnishing the best and cheapest Sunday-school books. There is now no kind of literature to be found, of greater variety, or of better quality, or more generally read, or having greater influence in forming the religious character of the youth of this nation, than the literature of Sunday schools.

The publications of the Book Concern of the Method-

ist-Episcopal Church for Sunday-school purposes are more than *fifteen hundred* bound volumes, — constituting of themselves as good a collection for a Sunday-school library as the issues of any single publishing house in the country; a semi-monthly publication, the "Sunday School Advocate," has over *three hundred thousand* copies, — the largest circulation of any Sunday-school periodical in the world; and the "Teacher's Journal," designed particularly for teachers. The libraries of the different Sunday schools in the Methodist-Episcopal Church contain more than *two millions and a half* of volumes.

The extent of these church nurseries, numerically considered, is very great. The Annual Conferences of this section of Methodism reported last year over *fourteen thousand* schools, over *one hundred and fifty thousand* teachers, and nearly a *million* scholars. The other branches of American Methodism cannot have less than half this number of schools, teachers, and scholars; and the statistics of Methodist Sunday schools, in the United States, far exceed the aggregate numbers of six of the other largest denominations of the country.

There is another way of determining the interest of Methodism in the prosperity of its Sunday schools, and its care for the salvation of its children: it is from the provision it makes for their accommodation, and the time it allots to them for their services. When they were first introduced, and for some years after, there were no special arrangements to make the place of their meeting attractive, or specially adapted to their design. Now, in all the larger churches of the denomination, there is a Sunday-school room, with its seats, its library room, Bible-class rooms, and infant-school rooms,

and other general arrangements well adapted for their use, and as specifically provided as rooms are fitted for the prayer and class meeting. Formerly, the time for Sunday-school service was an inconvenient and limited one: it was "sandwiched" in between the morning and afternoon public service; and only those who were willing to give up their usual noon meal, and go through a protracted and laborious duty, would attend it. Now, in a large part of the country, the Sunday school is regarded of sufficient importance to be entitled to a convenient part of the Sabbath day for its services, and those who desire may attend without inconvenience. The church, respecting this matter, has adopted the advice of Asbury, given in 1796, "Oh! if our people in the cities, towns, and villages, were but sufficiently sensible of the magnitude of this duty and its acceptableness to God; if they would establish Sunday schools wherever practicable, for the benefit of the children of the poor, and sacrifice a few public ordinances, every Lord's Day, to this charitable and useful exercise, — God would be to them instead of all the means they lose; yea, they would find to their present comfort, and the increase of their eternal glory, the truth and sweetness of those words, 'Mercy is better than sacrifice.'"

But the best evidence of the benefit of the Sunday school is found in the large number of its members that are early converted, and become intelligent, active members of the church. The Sunday school has been often called "the nursery of the church:" it is indeed so, and a thrifty nursery too. More than *three hundred thousand* of those connected with the Sunday schools of the Methodist-Episcopal Church have been reported

to have been converted during the last twenty years; and during the past year over *twenty-five thousand* similar conversions have been reported. The value of these converts is not, however, to be estimated alone by numbers; they have generally been those who by previous religious instruction have been trained for, and qualified to make, the best kind of Christians. Understanding the truths of Christianity, and prepared to act efficiently in the duties which the church and the demands of the age require of them, they have proved valuable members of the church.

A single fact will show how successful has been the attention given to the early conversion of its youth by the Methodist-Episcopal Church. In one of the largest Conferences of the church, numbering over two hundred, a member interested in the subject ascertained by personal inquiry of every one, that the average time of the conversion of all its members was under sixteen years of age!

Still further, in engaging in Sunday schools, in order to perform its duties in the religious education of the young, Methodism has practically applied a great principle in its economy, to enlist all its members in some active and practical form of doing good. These collateral agencies have furnished the church with a good opportunity to employ all its gifts in evangelical efforts, and by the application of the Scripture law, that he that watereth shall himself be watered, they have improved the quality of its members; and Methodism is itself much more active, devoted, and useful, for its extensive system of Sunday-school instruction.

CHAPTER XXI.

METHODISM AND CAMP-MEETINGS.

"They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods."

CAMP-MEETINGS have been intimately associated with the history of Methodism in this country, since the beginning of the present century. They have been common and popular festivals of the church throughout the whole land, as well among the steady, staid New Englanders as with the free and rustic populations of the far West. From Canada to Texas, they have been identified with the working, demonstrative agencies of Methodism. Historically, they are numbered among the means that have contributed largely to its growth, its spiritual state, and its efficiency. Yet it is a remarkable fact that they have never been recognized officially as belonging to its system; they have never even been named in its "Discipline," and cannot therefore be said to form an integral or essential part of the church economy. Strictly speaking, they are not necessary to Methodism, but have proved well-adapted agencies to enable it to spread Scripture holiness over the land. The eclectic spirit that always characterized the leaders of Methodism, and was ready to adopt any consistent, practical means to gain access

to the people with the word of life, or that would increase the facilities of Methodists to promote their spirituality and cultivate fraternal Christian intercourse with one another, — taught them to encourage camp-meetings, and to make them work with great advantage in the well-adjusted system of the church.

Like all the peculiarities that distinguish the instrumentalities of Methodism, camp-meetings did not originate from any preconcerted design in those who introduced them. Loosely speaking, they introduced themselves, and suggested their own advantages. They are exclusively an American institution. With all their usefulness in this country, they have never been held by Methodists in other countries.

The first camp-meeting held in this country, of which we have any account, and from which came the subsequent custom of holding them elsewhere, was in 1799, near the Red River, in Tennessee. It was improvised from the circumstances that required it. The occasion was a simple, rustic sacramental service, in which the religious interest became so great that the meeting continued for several successive days. The remarkably demonstrative exhibitions or effects on those present, like the wonders on the day of Pentecost, were "noised abroad" through all the country around, and the people, attracted by the reports, came for many miles to witness or to enjoy the strange scenes. They brought their provisions and bedding, and built tents, booths, or huts, for their temporary accommodation. This was the occasion and the manner of this first extemporized camp-meeting.

The fame of this meeting, from the extraordinary excitement attending it, and, not less, from the testimony

of those who had been religiously benefited by it, spread throughout the State and into Kentucky. Similar meetings followed in both these States, and were characterized by even greater religious interest, with a larger attendance, and with more remarkable results, than the first. These assemblies were immense, at some times numbering (as reported) twenty thousand: they drew the people in such crowds that they seemed, for the time, to depopulate many of the villages near them. At some of them, many hundreds professed to be converted. The habits of pioneer life were favorable to such extemporized gatherings. With them originated a great revival of religion, — greater, in proportion to the population, than any that has since transpired throughout the Western country.

These mass-gatherings were at first called "general camp-meetings;" because they were held for union services by Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, and were patronized and sustained by all these denominations. They were continued for a year or two as union meetings; but soon after they came to be exclusively supported by Methodists, and to the present time, with few exceptions, they have been held by them only.

Camp-meetings were soon introduced into all parts of the country. In 1801, almost with the introduction of Methodism itself, they were held in Ohio, and contributed to spread, and give permanence to, the denomination in that State. They became at once so common and popular in the West that they might have been properly called a "Western institution." In 1803, they were first held in Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Maryland; and, in a few years more, they had become so general as to be recognized everywhere as

a Methodist usage. They are now so popular and in such esteem that more than *one hundred and fifty* of these "Feasts of Tabernacles" are held annually throughout the United States, and varying in the attendance on each from one to fifteen thousand people. Not less than *a million* of persons hear the gospel preached every year at some camp-meeting, and more than *three thousand* were reported converted at these meetings in 1866.

The provision made for the accommodation of those who attend camp-meetings depends much on the circumstances and tastes of the attendants. When first introduced, and even now in sparsely settled regions of the country, the arrangements for the temporal convenience of the attendants have been very simple and rustic, and literally extemporized, — the ground itself being consecrated and used for only one meeting of a few days. Those, however, that are held nearer the large centres of population, are usually provided for more permanent occupation: the grounds are purchased and held for camp-meeting purposes exclusively, and dedicated for these sacred uses. They are usually laid out with considerable expense and taste. The tents, and sometimes neat cottages, are constructed with reference to the comfort of their occupants, and not unfrequently furnished with many of the conveniences, if not with the luxuries, of life. These metropolitan camp-meetings — and nearly every large city or group of cities has one — are located with reference to the healthiness of the place and the pleasantness of the grove; and, while the site for them is chosen so as to give them a decent facility of access, it is sought at the same time to avoid an evil proximity to the busy and disturbing world.

There are many such camp-grounds in various parts of the country, where for a number of years the Methodists of the regions around them have been accustomed to assemble, and with which there are religious associations of great personal historic value. The attendance upon them is anticipated and provided for with an interest not less, though very different in its spirit and design, than is felt by many fashionable pleasure-seekers in respect to their resort to some summer watering-place.

These meetings seem to be increasing rather than diminishing in number and in the attendance upon them. The objection to them, that they are not needed or useful in the densely-settled regions, where there are churches and local conveniences for the religious services of the communities, does not appear to have any practical force to destroy their popularity. True, they were originally introduced for the accommodation of a people who lived wide apart, and who had no churches, or insufficient room in their small log-chapels for many to assemble for worship; and they proved of great advantage to those who were thus situated. But they have been equally beneficial and attractive to those who have resorted to them from the full city; and Methodists of the metropolis acknowledge their usefulness, not less than those from the hills and the prairies.

Historically, camp-meetings have been noted for what is commonly called religious excitement. Many persons have exhibited at them the most intense religious emotions, often to such a degree as to overcome their physical functions, and to render them for a season seemingly unconscious and helpless. Because of this fact, especially in their early history, camp-

meetings have been obnoxious, even to many professed Christians, — they have not sympathized with what was called the "slaying power." We shall not attempt to show why such phenomena appeared at these meetings, nor why such scenes were more frequent at camp-meetings in former years than they are at present; our duty is rather to give the facts respecting them, and how they affected the progress and character of Methodism itself. That such scenes did usually transpire, and that the subjects of them were both Christians and sinners; that they were those who were disposed to regard such exercises as favorable to an improved religious state, and those, too, who had previously declared their want of confidence in them, and were violent opposers of any such demonstrations; that those who were thus strangely affected did often profess to have obtained the pardon of their sins, and declared it with shouts and with thanksgivings, and united with God's people, and lived subsequently a life becoming godliness, — are facts too well attested to admit of doubt. There may have been many instances of extravagance, and an occasional case of hypocrisy (there was a Simon Magus, who thought to buy the gift of God with money); but such exceptions to the sincerity and integrity of those who were really and powerfully moved by the Spirit are no more valid objections to the reality of the work than the attempts of the magicians to imitate the miracles of Moses are proof against the reality of these miracles.

Wherever camp-meetings were held, these demonstrative scenes occurred; perhaps it is not too much to say that they were encouraged, and that they were regarded as good signs. In the West, where they origi-

nated, in every assemblage there were scores or hundreds who were prostrated by a remarkably strange power, and Methodism gathered many of its best members from the subjects converted at its camp-meetings. Nor were such effects peculiar to Western camp-meetings: they were as common in New England as in Ohio. A description of one of these may be given as a sample of others. In the "Life of Bishop Hedding," we have an account of a camp-meeting held in Hebron, Conn., in 1809, while he was presiding elder. Such meetings were of recent introduction in that region, and many scandalous stories had been circulated in regard to them. His biographer says, "Often, during the exercises, individuals would fall prostrate to the ground. As the meeting progressed, the interest continued to increase. On the fourth or fifth day, during the evening sermon, the power of the Holy Ghost fell on the congregation with overwhelming force. The people began to fall on every side. Many who had come to the meeting out of mere idle curiosity were stricken down to the ground, and cried aloud for mercy. Many of other Christian denominations, who were greatly prejudiced against the Methodists, and especially against such exercises, fell powerless to the earth, and afterwards acknowledged the mighty hand of God. Quite a number of Methodists also, who had never witnessed such scenes, and were strongly opposed to them, fell along with the others. It was an awful hour of the manifestation of God's power and grace. Within the space of a few minutes, it was ascertained that not less than *five hundred* lay prostrate by the power of the Holy Ghost. Although it was evening, the report of these events

was spread through the town of Colchester, a few miles distant; and the people flocked in crowds to the scene. Physicians came, and passed around among the prostrate people, feeling the pulses of the helpless. They looked, as they passed around, as solemn as if they were just going forth to the judgment. The people were all amazed and confounded; the scoffer was silenced; the blasphemer turned pale and trembled; the infidel stood aghast. The universal cry of all was, 'Truly this is the mighty power of God: let us adore and tremble before him.' That night of glorious power was with multitudes the turning-point that thenceforward shaped their destinies heavenward; and, in the breasts of hundreds of Christians, the holy fire was kindled anew into a more glorious and inextinguishable flame. Victory was now complete. The fame of this meeting spread far and wide, and exerted a powerful influence in favor of Methodism through all that region of country."

Why such scenes are less frequent now than in former times may not be easily explained; that they are, is, however, historically true. But it is also true that the number of conversions at camp-meetings of recent date are not less than they were at these meetings fifty years ago.

There is much in the scenes and exercises of a camp-meeting to awaken peculiar impressions, and to favor religious emotions. The novelty of the occasion may create interest, and excite a spirit of speculation respecting its peculiarities: but, above these, there will be a solemnity of feeling arising from the ever-pervading impression that the "city in the woods" has been built expressly for the purpose of worshipping God; and an irrepressible consciousness of the divine presence will be

seriously felt. The services are such as to intensify this feeling. As the vast multitude are listening to preaching, particularly earnest, direct, and evangelical; or to the singing, in its loud-swelling notes of praise like the sound of many waters, — singing, too, if not uttered with great artistic skill, yet coming from hearts full of sincere love and devout gratitude to the Almighty; or hearing the fervent, simple, and importunate prayer, ascending from the various companies in the different tents, to Him whose ear is attentive to their petitions, — these services, accompanied by the conviction that there is a divine attestation to their acceptance, and that they fill the hearts of the worshippers with peace and joy, bring home to all present, even to the most careless, a conscious solemnity, and awaken in them the belief that "This is the house of God, and the very gate of heaven;" and many who had come to speculate, or to mock, remain to pray and praise.

Camp-meetings are extraordinary seasons for the effectual preaching of the Word, not only because they favor an attentive seriousness in the congregation, but because of their inspiring effect on the preacher. There is an inspiration to a public speaker in the presence of a great multitude, and to none more than to the preacher of the gospel. Ten thousand hearers awaken in him a sense of responsibility, and arouse all the energies of his soul to vindicate the claims of his Master, and to make the gospel a message of power to his hearers. Hence it has always been true, that the preaching at camp-meetings has been more remarkable than on all other occasions for its earnestness, its true eloquence, and its astonishing effects. Men who at ordinary times have been known only for a limited

power in their public addresses have risen above themselves, and held the vast listening throng in rapt attention, and moved them by words of overwhelming power. The greatest preaching ever heard on this continent has been at camp-meetings, or when heard by such immense multitudes as gather at such times. How such a company stirred the hearts of Wesley and Whitefield at Kingswood and Moorfields! how it fired the souls of McKendrie and Bascom, of Cookman and Fisk, and qualified them, with divine help, to take captive the thoughts and feelings of their hearers, and sway them as the forest is moved by the tempest!

The best reason for camp-meetings is, that they have been occasions where great numbers have been converted. This is an appeal to facts that may not be denied, and its force cannot be resisted. Such facts are abundant all along the history of these meetings. They have been efficient agencies to awaken the attention of many to the claims of a religious life, who otherwise would probably never have felt such awakenings; and thousands have been brought to the knowledge of the truth through their instrumentality. The novelty of the occasion may have brought them to it; they may have come from the promptings of curiosity or for diversion; they may have come to disturb the quiet and order of the services; but, brought within the range of the truth, its arrow has entered between the "joints of their harness," and the wounded sinner has found relief only in the blood of Christ. The converts at such seasons have been quite often those who were not accustomed to attend religious worship; and, as this class are as numerous in more thickly-settled communities as in regions where the population is sparse, camp-meetings

have been quite as productive of good in the neighborhoods of towns and cities as where the people live more widely apart.

Besides these proofs of the benefit of camp-meetings, there is a sound philosophy that justifies holding them: they are calculated to favor what might be called a religious state of mind, by an undivided attention to meditation and worship for successive days together. In the ordinary routine of home life, there are cares and diversions that interfere with an exclusive and protracted service of self-examination, consecration, and prayer; but the sincere attendants at camp-meetings say to the disturbing world, "Stay thou there, while we go up and worship." They separate themselves from all diverting influences, and formally, as well as in spirit, give themselves wholly to the divine service.

There is one reason for holding these annual assemblies in the grove, not fully appreciated, and, because it appears less strictly religious, not often named: it is that they afford a reasonable and profitable way to give recreation to the mind and body of Christians, — a change from the duties of ordinary life, that in some form is beneficial. Recreation is not inactivity, but the stimulant of a change that becomes a species of rest, because of its variety. All classes of the community seek to obtain this. The mass of the world find it in dissipation and pleasure. They seek it in their holidays, their summer resorts, and in what they denominate their sports. Surely there can be no better way for God's people to obtain it than by invigorating the heart and mind by devoutly waiting on the Lord.

These meetings have proved of inestimable value to Methodism, as they have aided in making Methodists a

homogeneous people, and preserved in them an earnest spiritual character. In olden times the quarterly meetings, as they were then held, contributed to produce these results; but the old-fashioned quarterly-meeting festivals have passed away. Camp-meetings have, in a measure, supplied their place. The feasts of the Jews were divine appointments, designed to increase the attachment of that people to the temple and its service, to intensify their spirit of nationality, and to strengthen the alliances of the tribes. As long as they came regularly together at Jerusalem, from Dan to Beersheba, for the Passover and Pentecost, it aided to make them a united and fraternal people. Similar results have followed in Methodism, as every one in Zion has appeared before God at the camp-meeting. The hearts of the people have been drawn together in love, sympathy, and fraternity; and, when the members have separated from these spiritual feasts to their different localities, they have had a better appreciation of each other's character, and felt a stronger bond of alliance holding them together. They have returned home with an increased love for Methodism, and have had a new inspiration to work together as Methodists, in one spirit, for a common Saviour and for a common cause.

CHAPTER XXII.

METHODISM AND MORALITY.

"The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

THERE are "two tables" to the law, according to the doctrine of Methodism, — love to God and love to man; and Methodists hold that both of them must be obeyed in order to be a true Christian. Still, like their Master, they believe that the command to love the Lord with all the heart is so far of greater importance than the second, to love the neighbor, as necessarily to precede it, prepare for it, and produce it. In a word, they hold that true religion, which is a conscious love of God in the heart, has the same relation to true morality, or the exhibition of love to our neighbor, as the root has to the tree: the latter must derive its power and life from the former. Hence the first teaching of Methodism has been, whether to Pharisee or publican, "Ye must be born again." It had little hope of a man until he was made to feel the need of this, and was ready, by repentance toward God and faith in Christ, to seek and obtain it. Its Christianity was not a system of forms, or of opinions, or of attempted moralities, aside from the work of God's Spirit wrought upon the heart. This must precede all else to make the perfect Christian man.

But Methodism has always held that obedience to the second table would follow obedience to the first, — that, when a man was truly converted, he would become truly moral; and it has ever taught that the love of our neighbor was a good test whether we indeed loved God. In its "General Rules," it said that a desire to flee the wrath to come, and be saved from sin, would be seen in its fruits, — in observing the moral law. Whenever, therefore, men became Methodists, they were expected to show it by the change in their manner of living, — in moral as well as praying lives.

Methodism introduced a new epoch in respect to Christian experience, but with this it introduced another change, quite as manifest and important: it produced a radical reformation in the morality of the people. Wherever it went, it led men, even those who had sunk into the lowest depths of practical wickedness, to reform their lives and give up their sins. Its influence on the colliers of Kingswood, — transforming them from a beastly, drunken, fighting, and violent class, to a cleanly, sober, peaceable, and honest community, was only a legitimate effect of the gracious work of the Spirit on their hearts. This effect, the same in its nature and certainty, was always produced, whenever wicked men could be induced to receive the truths that were preached by Methodist itinerants.

The standard of morality was very low at the time that Wesley began his evangelical movement; the practice of morality, far below its standard. Methodism had therefore to elevate the one, and to reform the other; and it did both with marked success. The real secret of this success was, first, from the influence of the converting grace of Christ on the hearts of its

subjects; and, next, from the superior code it adopted in the specification of the particular acts that were essential to a moral life; and, still further, in insisting tenaciously that this code should be observed. As the religion of Methodists was founded in the law of supreme love to God, their morality was to be consistent with love to their neighbor; and a failure to practise this excluded the delinquent from the privileges of Wesley's societies. Methodism was thus a pure standard of morality, and a system of rigid discipline to maintain it. The result of both was, as we have said, that it was a great reformer of the lives of the people.

There was great comprehensiveness in its enumeration of sins against morality. It applied to the temper of the mind, the utterance of the lips, and the acts of the life. In this respect, it followed the Sermon on the Mount, and applied as much to covetousness as to overt acts of theft, to lust as to positive adultery, to hating the neighbor as to violently maltreating him. It laid the axe at the root of the tree, and cut down every thing that was a violation of the law of love.

We do not propose to inquire how far Methodism was successful in reforming men from every particular sin to which they were addicted. With its strict code, and with a scrutiny of its members approaching almost to surveillance, it usually produced a complete reformation from every vice; and the lives of Methodists were made to conform to a godly pattern.

There were two very common and popular sins in this country, — intemperance and slavery, — against which Methodism had to contend. Its treatment of the former has been honorable to itself, and consistent with its high standard of morality; in respect to the latter,

its course has not always been without some appearance that would justify censure.

The almost universal use of intoxicating drinks, and the fearfully demoralizing effects of the practice on all the interests of society and religion, when the Wesleyan movement begun, made it imperative for Methodism to declare its condemnation of the practice, and especially as a large part of its converts were from a class of society who were generally the victims of the evil. The opposition to Methodism was usually encouraged and stimulated by those under the influence of strong drink. Wesley therefore assailed the sin with decidedly condemnatory language, and made the disuse of intoxicating liquors a condition of admission in his societies. In his "General Rules," in 1743, he forbade "drunkenness, or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, except in cases of extreme necessity." So far as it applied to his societies, he was the founder of the first Temperance Society, and was the first great Temperance Reformer of modern times. Neither the Established Church nor Dissenters made any such prohibitory rules in respect to their communicants; nor were there any associations designed particularly to promote a reformation from intemperance. When Wesley made rules, he insisted that they should be obeyed; and the effect of this rule was that dram-drinking was utterly excluded from Wesleyan Methodism. For many years, it was the only strictly temperance organization in England.

Intemperance was not less common in this country than in the Old; nor were the churches here any more opposed to it, or more strict in discipline to prevent it, than they were there. Not unfrequently a church official

was the chief vender of ardent spirits; and the use of them, with but few exceptions, an ordinary practice, even by professed Christians. Methodism immediately interdicted the sale and use of them in all its members. As early as 1783, it said in its "Discipline" that they "should by no means be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell and drink them in drams." In the "General Rules" of 1789, the church forbade "drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors or drinking them." This rule, that has continued with but little modification to the present time, was not a dead letter. The itinerants were themselves strict in observing its requisitions, and in enforcing its application to all members of the church. Years before other churches had adopted any such stringent regulations to prevent intemperance, and before voluntary temperance societies were formed, the Methodist Church was working efficiently and faithfully in the cause. In fact, so generally was this understood by the leading men of Methodism, that when the American Temperance Union was organized, in 1826, some of them declined, unwisely though honestly, to take part in the organization, alleging that in their church they were already connected with a strictly temperance society. There were, however, other prominent Methodists, — ministers and laymen, — who engaged in the new movement. Very soon, these were followed by the church generally, and exerted a great moral influence in advancing the Temperance Reform. Steadily and uniformly, Methodism, in statute and in practice, has taken and maintained the position that selling and using intoxicating drinks were inconsistent with an irreproachable Christian character.

Methodism has a record respecting slavery that is in part honorable, and in part dishonorable. A narrative of its treatment of this "institution" will show the correctness of this opinion.

It is necessary to know how universal was the support and patronage given to this evil, in order to know the difficulties with which the opponents of slavery had to contend, when Methodism was first introduced in this country. For more than two centuries, the slave-trade from Africa was carried on by every maritime nation of Europe, and the system of slavery was sustained and defended by every ruler and people bearing the Christian name. The slave-trade was a source of great revenue, and prosecuted by large corporations, with kings and queens at their head. Slavery was early introduced into this country; and there were slaves in every colony, with the exception of Massachusetts, at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. The supposed profitableness of slave labor, in the warm climate of the Southern colonies, was the chief reason for its great relative increase in the Southern portion of the country. At the time when the itinerants of Methodism began their labors there, slavery was common, and generally defended, in all the region south of Pennsylvania. In their attempts to oppose it, and to eradicate it from these communities, they had, therefore, to meet with all the opposition that cupidity and popular usage could invent. It is only fair to allow the church any apology or justification for its future course which such a state of things can suggest.

One thing is certain: The early Methodist preachers were, generally, decided opponents of slavery; and they denounced it as immoral in its practice and inconsistent

with the profession of the Christian name. In doing this, they only followed the lead of Wesley, who had said of the American slave-trade, that it was "the vilest that ever saw the sun." American Methodism began very early its efforts to "extirpate the evil," not only in denouncing its immorality by its preachers personally, but by the adoption of rules that condemned it, and provided to exclude from the societies all who were engaged in it. There was a straight-forward and peremptory tone to the language employed by the first ministers that shows how strong was their aversion to the institution. At the Conference in 1780, it said, "This Conference acknowledges that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours. We pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom." A more consistent and comprehensive judgment of the system was never written. If it had said we "require," instead of we "advise," the statute would have been complete.

The Methodist-Episcopal Church, at its organization in 1784, said (in answer to the question, "What methods can we take to extirpate slavery?"), "We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the inalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in the deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery than is perhaps to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are all capable of the image of God. We therefore think it our most bounden duty to take immediately some effectual

method to extirpate this abomination from us." The discipline of the church then provided a system of rules for a gradual, though speedy, emancipation of all slaves held by members of the church; no person holding slaves should be admitted into "Society" or the Lord's Supper until he had complied with these rules. Those who bought or sold slaves, or gave them away, except for the purpose of freeing them, were to be immediately expelled. There was, in this avowal of sentiment respecting slavery, and in these rules for its extirpation, a ring of true and decided Christian principle and firmness that indicated how resolutely our fathers were disposed to condemn, and to remove from the church, any evil, however great and popular. There was, however, a note appended to the rules, that unfortunately destroyed their practical benefit for the purpose of emancipation, — a note that involved the strange inconsistency of a Christian church, after it had declared a practice contrary to the law of God and the rights of mankind, basing its administration in regard to this practice on the concurrence of the civil law. Some of the States had adopted laws making emancipation difficult, if not impossible; and the Conference, with good intentions, doubtless, and lest it should embarrass the members of the societies, said, "These rules are to affect the members of our society no farther than as they are consistent with the laws of the States in which they reside,"— a condition which has been the most plausible and frequent plea of justification for practical slavery that has been urged by professed Christians in this country.

It could not be expected that such a declaration, and such regulations, formally made by the ministers of the church, would be received by the people affected by

them, without great opposition; and a critical period in the action of Methodism in respect to slavery was at hand: it was to decide whether the church would be true to its convictions, and maintain its statute, or yield to the demand of the world, and rescind or suspend it. Unfortunately, the world prevailed: the tide of opposition was too strong for the faith and integrity of the church, and in six months the obnoxious rules were suspended.

It is comparatively easy for one to pass judgment on the conduct of others, and say what they should have done in given circumstances, while he is far removed from the perils that threatened them. Yet we cannot help believing that that was the decisive period, and that the action of the church at that time was to determine the future relations of slavery to Methodism, and perhaps to this country; that, if the leaders of Methodism had adhered to the regulations they adopted, they would have succeeded in effecting a speedy abolition of the system of slavery from the land. Slavery was not then so firmly rooted, nor was it regarded of such importance, as it very soon came to be in the minds of those who supported it. There were many, even in the midst of it, and some who were participants in its practice, who considered it, at best, of doubtful propriety; and some of the leading statesmen of the South were ready to favor measures for its abolition. At the North, some of the States were moving to free themselves from it; and a majority of Methodists, both North and South, were opposed to it. Had the newly-organized Methodist Church adhered tenaciously to its rules, it might have provoked some persecution; and a few of its members, from their persistence

in holding slaves, might have been excluded the societies; the progress of the church might have been hindered for a season in a few localities: but truth and righteousness would have ultimately prevailed, and slavery, in the Church at least, would have been abolished. If the Methodist Church had stood firm on the platform of principle it had laid down, the other churches of the land could not have failed to follow in its path, and the entire weight of the Christian influence in the country would have been arrayed against slavery. What, then, could have prevented its certain abolition? Who can tell the glorious results that would have followed, had our fathers stood firm to their resolves? Slavery has been the bane of this nation; like Canaanites in the land, it has wrought the principal evils from which the nation has suffered, and exposed the State as well as the Church to its greatest perils. It has made the country sectional in its feelings, provoked the displeasure of God, and finally brought on the greatest rebellion the world has known, with all its sacrifice of blood and treasure.

We will not blame the fathers of Methodism: a more honest, conscientious class of men than they were have never lived. They supposed that by a lenient treatment of the evil, while they declared their abhorrence of it, they would more certainly accomplish its extirpation than by a peremptory exclusion from the church of all engaged in it. Could they have seen the evil influence of their course on the future, and felt how much depended on decisive measures, as we now see, no men would have contended more resolutely than they — whatever might have been their persecution, or the reproach involved in it — for the immediate emancipation of every slave in the land.

But they yielded to the pressure, and the obnoxious rules were suspended; and, from that time forward, the action of Methodism respecting slavery became more and more lenient and compromising, until in later years it treated the system with practical complacency, and many, even of the preachers, became its defenders and participated in the guilt. Notwithstanding the opposition to the rules, some of the preachers were faithful in denouncing slavery wherever they went. Dr. Coke went southward after the Christmas Conference, and in Virginia began to speak publicly against it. He says, "I now begin to exhort our societies to emancipate their slaves." His exhortations provoked persecution. At another time he says, "The testimony I bore in this place against slaveholding provoked many of the unawakened to retire out of the barn, and to combine to flog me (so they expressed it) as soon as I came out. A high-headed lady also went out and told the rioters, as I was afterwards informed, that she would give fifty pounds, if they would give that little doctor one hundred lashes. When I came out, they surrounded me, but had only power to talk." Both Coke and Asbury prepared petitions for the preachers to circulate, for the signatures of the freeholders, asking the General Assembly of Virginia to pass laws for the immediate or gradual emancipation of all the slaves. They called on Washington, and asked his signature; and, though he declined to sign their petition, he declared that he was of their sentiments in respect to the subject. Many of the itinerants — and among them O'Kelly, a man of great influence — preached against slavery. Some of the members of the societies emancipated their slaves. But the tide of opposition was too strong for the courage of the

church; and denunciations of the system became less frequent, and more tame and equivocal, until in a few years they ceased altogether.

The subsequent official action of the church was a natural result from its having yielded to the demands of slavery, and suspended its rules. The "Discipline" continued to declare, "We do hold in deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery; that we are more than ever convinced of the great evil of slavery;" and to ask, "What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery?" But all these positive declarations of its condemnation were only "wooden guns;" and, step by step, the church relaxed its efforts for the extirpation of the evil. First it limited its rules against slaveholding to official members, and to local and travelling preachers; then it began to give counsel, and attempted to regulate it, — to "admonish and exhort all slaves to render due respect and obedience to the commands and interests of their masters." Steadily the practice of slaveholding became more and more common among Methodists; and preachers themselves, by marriage or otherwise, were found complicated with it, some of them defending the practice by the authority of the Bible. Yet all this time the church was showing the glaring inconsistency of printing in its "Discipline" "that it held slavery in deepest abhorrence," and allowing the practice of it in its members.

Movements to remedy an evil are sometimes provoked from the excess or the boldness of those who practise it; and the daring enormities of slaveholding, and the assumption of slaveholders and their apologists in respect to it, at length aroused attention and provoked its condemnation. Slavery, that at first only

asked toleration, assumed to have rights and immunities. It insisted that the non-slaveholding portion of the church should say nothing in its condemnation, that those engaged in it should be eligible to all church honors, and that it was a benevolent and Christian institution. From a plea of justification for it from necessity, because the laws of the Southern States prohibited emancipation, its defenders proceeded to advocate its establishment for mercy and justice, for the good of the slave, and by the right of the master. The disease assumed so malignant a type as to awaken great alarm in some portions of the church; and Northern preachers began to condemn it in the pulpit and through the press, and, in some instances, to ask its reprobation by the action of Annual Conferences. This not only aroused the indignation of the South, but it created sympathy for their Southern brethren in a large part of the Northern church, who required that all agitation of the subject should cease. The discussion, however, of the evils of slavery, and especially of its pernicious relation to Methodism, continued: it could not be put down. Even the command of ecclesiastical authority did not avail to stop it, and the "Abolition" party gathered adherents every day. The General Conference of 1836 declared that it was "decidedly opposed to abolitionism." Divisions, if not alienations, were affecting nearly all the Northern Conferences, because of the agitations of the subject. The South threatened to secede, if the equality of slaveholders to all church privileges was not acknowledged by the election of one to the episcopal office. Many anti-slavery men of the North were ready to do the same thing, if the church did not adopt some measures to

exclude slavery from the church altogether; a small company of these left in 1843, and organized a new church. For ten years the harmony and integrity of Methodism, in every part of the country, was disturbed and threatened by the excitement on the question of slavery. Reforms honestly and earnestly begun never go backwards. The conscience of the Northern portion of the church began to be seriously affected by the discussions that had transpired, and a majority were resolved to say to slavery that its pretensions and arrogance must at least be stopped. Providence opened the way to do this unexpectedly; and the General Conference of 1844 was required in two cases, that it could not evade, to give its decision respecting the right of a minister and of a bishop to retain their official places while they were slaveholders. The action of the Conference on these cases was the decisive one,— that determined the future position of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in regard to slavery. It is true that it did not pronounce an opinion directly and explicitly on the moral character of slaveholding, or that those holding this relation should be disqualified for church membership; yet it did, indirectly, give its opinion respecting these, and the Conference decided, by a large majority, that a slaveholding bishop should "desist from the exercise of his office so long as this impediment remains." The result of this action is well known. The Southern portion of the church withdrew from its relation with the Methodist-Episcopal Church, and organized the Methodist-Episcopal Church South; and, as would naturally follow such a course, every thing that looked like a disapprobation or condemnation of slavery disappeared from the discipline it adopted. But another result, not

less important, followed. Having begun to act, by arresting the encroachments of slavery on the ministerial office, the Methodist-Episcopal Church was ready to examine with more candor and intelligence the nature of the system itself. Very soon the general mind of the church began to condemn the institution, and ultimately it declared that no slaveholder should be eligible to its communion. With the exception of the seceding portion, — the Methodist-Episcopal Church South, — American Methodism has returned to the doctrine of the fathers, and now declares that it holds in "deepest abhorrence the system of American slavery." But it has done more than they did: it now insists that all participants or abettors of slavery shall have no place or fellowship among its membership.

CHAPTER XXIII.

METHODISM AND WOMAN.

"Help those women who labored with me in the gospel, whose names are in the book of life."

HOW imperfect would any sketch of Methodism be, without some notice of what it has done for woman and what she has done for it! To how many has it given a sanctified development of those graces that best adorn her sex; to how many given a name, cherished and embalmed by the memory of every Christian virtue! Methodism has received from woman both aid and ornament, without which it would have been weak and rugged. In every phase of its history, she has been its "helpmeet" and the light of its dwelling.

We have referred to the agencies of Methodism, to improve the head and heart of the young; to the grand evangelical mission scheme of the church, extending its field of occupation to every clime, and lifting from barbarism the most debased nations of the earth. We have spoken of the sufferings endured by itinerants and missionaries who have shown the noblest qualities of true Christian heroism; we have narrated the triumphant deaths of men who counted not their lives dear to themselves that they might publish the grace of God to their fellow-men; but none of these agencies

or labors or sufferings or triumphs are worthy of more honor than should be given to the work of Methodist women. The law of kindness has been on their lips, the beauty of holiness in their lives. In self-denial and sacrifice and devotion for the cause of Christ, they have proved themselves entitled to the Saviour's commendation, "She hath done what she could." True, from the very nature of their position, their deeds have been less public, and their virtues less heralded, than those of men: but their work, like the leaven which the woman took and hid in three measures of meal until all was leavened, though not seen outwardly, has nevertheless permeated the whole church; and Methodism is a great debtor, for its rank and power in the world, to the Christian qualities and labors of its women.

It is a fact that has never allowed of exceptions, that, in the same degree that religion has shown itself to be pure and sanctifying, as it has affected the heart with true love to God, and the lives of men have been made godly by its transforming influence, it has correspondingly elevated woman in social influence, and given her an increased power to be useful. This remark is well illustrated as she appears in the Bible. The Old Testament is interspersed with records of her worth: there is an occasional mention of pious women, who, with a faith like Jochebed, did not fear the wrath of the king; or of Hannah, bringing her child Samuel to minister before the Lord; or of Esther, perilling her own life, and saying, as she goes unbidden into the royal presence in behalf of her doomed nation, "If I perish, I perish." But it is in the New Testament, under a brighter and more spiritual dispensation, that woman is frequently mentioned for her piety, and her influence

is more distinctly honored. Here it is, in the advent of the Messiah, that distinguished honors are conferred on Mary and Elizabeth; and the prophetic spirit, so long departed from Israel, is given back again to Anna. Here we find a Martha and Mary of Bethany, to whose house Jesus loved to resort after the labors of the day in Jerusalem; and receive the loving attentions of one, in her hospitalities and careful solicitude for his comfort, and the not less loving trust of the other in her attentions to his instructions. Here we find a Magdalene, in her penitent and grateful soul bathing the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hair of her head. Here are Joanna, the "wife of Herod's steward," and Susannah, and many others, who ministered unto Christ "of their substance." Here are the Marys, "last at the cross and first at the sepulchre," and the first commissioned to proclaim the Saviour's resurrection to his disciples. Throughout the advent of Christ, it is woman only that is never found to persecute or to doubt him. In the full dispensation of the gospel, and in the organized primitive church, women are honorably and frequently named. They were in the company waiting in prayer and supplication for the promised Holy Ghost. It was at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, that the disciples were praying in behalf of Peter; and to this house he naturally went after his deliverance from prison. How many are mentioned with distinction by Paul in his letter to the Romans! Here are "Phebe our sister, of the church which is in Cenchrea," who had "been a succorer of many, and myself also;" and Priscilla, the wife of Aquila,— of both of whom Paul speaks three times in his Epistles, and whom he calls my "helpers in Christ Jesus;"

who instructed Apollos "in the way of God more perfectly." Here are Mary, who he says "bestowed much labor on us," and Junia, "of note among the apostles;" and Tryphena and Tryphosa; and Persis, "who labored much in the Lord," — all of whom had doubtless obtained distinction and were well known in the church at Rome for their zeal and gifts and faithfulness in Christ. There are others of whose deeds or characters mention is made in the "Acts" and in the "Epistles." What is particularly meant by the title of "deaconess," or "prophetess," or by saying that they were "fellow-helpers," or "labored much," it may not be possible for us to decide; but certainly it cannot signify less than that they were zealous teachers and devoted servants of Christ, and were worthy of honor for their successful labors; and that women were not only allowed and encouraged, but that they engaged in it as their duty, and took a distinguished part, to build up the early church.

One of the best evidences that may be given, that Methodism is a revival of primitive Christianity, is that it restored woman to her appropriate position of Christian influence, and gave back to her the activity that she had in the Apostolic Church. Since the first century, there had been occasional instances of women who were eminent as patrons or examples of the Christian faith; but relatively they had been very few. Even the reformation of Luther lacked the power and the permanence it would have had, had it made woman a teacher of its great Protestant truths, and a co-worker in its reforming efforts, — if it had been blessed with Priscillas and Marys, to teach the way of God more perfectly to the children of Luther's time. We look in vain for any historic accounts of distinguished religious women, at

the time that the Wesleyan reformation begun. Susannah, the mother of the Wesleys, seems like a strange exception,—a woman whose extraordinary character appears more singular than common, in contrast with the women around her. It was the mission of Methodism to restore to woman her proper place, and to assign to her the legitimate duties that belonged to her, in an evangelical movement to revive scriptural Christianity in the world.

We have seen how Wesley conquered his "High-Church prejudices," and consented that Maxwell, a layman, might preach. It was a greater conquest, considering the customs and prejudices of his time, that he allowed women to become teachers of religion, or even to speak in an assembly with men. But he did both. Doubtless his recollections of his mother, instructing the parishioners at Epworth while his father was in jail, helped him to adopt this independence of Church order; but it arose more from his eclectic spirit, that consulted what was most profitable to godliness, than what was laid down or implied in the customs of the Church. In fact, women could not be repressed in their desires to make known the grace of God, when they had been made partakers of it; and they became to Wesley and his itinerants what Tryphena and Junia were to Paul, —"helpers in the Lord," because they "could but speak the things they had seen and heard." Woman's agency in Methodism was not by appointment so much as by the impulsions of the spirit.

Wesley gave quite a license to the religious exercises of women in his societies. Their first and simplest duty, and one that was required of all, was that they should speak in class. In this social and unpretentious

way, they were each educated to state clearly their religious experience. It was a great novelty, indeed an innovation on all usage; but, being in a select company, it gave no particular offence to those without. Yet it was of great practical value, for it prepared them to speak the same word of experience elsewhere than in the class; and every Methodist woman was thus educated to give "a reason of the hope that was in her." This custom of speaking in the class naturally extended to the larger assembly of the love-feast and the social prayer-meeting, and often assumed the form of exhortation. By a similar process, Methodist women were taught to lead in social prayer; and it was soon found that women were endowed with valuable gifts in these religious exercises, and were instrumental by them in doing great good. To avail himself of these gifts, Wesley formed female classes in all his societies, and appointed those of their own sex for leaders. He employed some women, in whose piety and judgment he had great confidence, to go through the societies and supervise, or, as he called it, "regulate," these female classes. The greater part of his published correspondence was with such women as Grace Murray, Dinah Evans, and Hester Ann Rogers; and it exhibits how highly he prized the women who labored with him in the gospel. Some of the most eminent women in Methodism, both Calvinistic and Arminian, in the last century, were of aristocratic birth: such were Lady Huntingdon and Lady Fitzgerald, — the former, the patron and practical founder of Calvinistic Methodism; and both of them esteemed the reproach and service of Christ greater honor than any earthly titles. Some were of very humble birth, but were elevated to a real

Christian nobility and usefulness by the power and grace of the gospel.

Women have not acted a less conspicuous or less useful part in the progress of American than of English Methodism. The same reasons that led them to this distinction, under Wesley's immediate sanction and encouragement there, have made them, if possible, more active and successful here; and the history of every Methodist church on this continent is associated with the work of faith and labor of love of some zealous and holy women. The foundress of Methodism on this continent, — Barbara Heck, — whose righteous soul was stirred within her at the sight of the backsliding of her countrymen, is only a type of many others of her sex who have initiated measures for preaching the gospel, as Embury preached it, in hundreds and thousands of places where the Word had never been heard before; and who, by their resolute enterprise and courage, have assumed the responsibility of establishing Methodist worship in new and hitherto unoccupied fields. The pioneer character of much of American life, in the early days of Methodism, furnished a good opportunity for the practice of such pioneer virtues in many Methodist women. Instances of this kind were abundant; and some of the best men that the church has known have been brought to Christ, and some of the most flourishing churches of the land have been begun, by the labors of woman.

An interesting narrative of one of these "Mothers in Israel" is given in the life of Bishop Hedding. Toward the close of the last century, a godly Methodist couple moved from Western Connecticut into Northern Vermont, where young Hedding resided. In the town where they settled, there was hardly any public religious

services. These new settlers opened their house, and invited the neighbors to assemble every Sabbath for worship. They usually led the devotions, and some one present, by request, read one of Wesley's sermons. These services were continued for two or three years; when the itinerants, who had penetrated that region of the State, were invited by them to visit the place and preach at their house. A great revival followed, and quite a large Methodist society was formed. Young Hedding was among the number of the converts. But he always attributed his conversion chiefly to the agency of the "elect lady" of this house, who "often conversed with him, earnestly and tearfully, on the interests of his soul, and succeeded at last in awaking in him a deep concern for his spiritual welfare." How little did she know the great work she was doing, and the distinguished honor God was putting on her, as the foundress of a Methodist church; and especially in being the instrument in the salvation of one who would prove a "chosen vessel" of the Lord, and the best expositor of ecclesiastical law that Methodism has had! How many instances similar to this of the pioneer agency of woman could be given, to enrich the history of American Methodism!

It was thought worthy of the notice of an inspired historian, that "many women ministered to Christ of their substance." The design of this notice is not so much to let us know that He who had all things at his command did not lack for food convenient for him as to tell us that women supplied it, and to record the loving, devoted spirit of Susannah and her associates. Where was there an itinerant, in the days of large circuits, and long rides, and hard labor, who did not prove

in his own experience that the successors of such women still lived, and were as ready now as in the days of his incarnation to show their love for Christ by ministering to his servants? How often the loving, cheerful welcome and hospitality, and the sympathy and careful provision of such women for his wants, relieved the trials and hardships of the weary Methodist preacher!

Asbury, because he took the pains to write it in a book, that, where it was read, it should be told of them, has given us many instances of the kind attention of these elect women. This pioneer bishop refers with great satisfaction to those "resting-places" in his vast circuit, where he found rest for the body, and was refreshed in spirit. Had every itinerant kept a "journal," he could have recorded as many such instances as the bishop. Sometimes these ministrations of love were in the midst of affluence, and the hospitality shown was literally of "their substance;" sometimes they were made cheerfully and lovingly, at the expense of sacrifice and self-denial, and the entertainment given was like dividing "the last crust" with the preacher: but, in either case, it was done from love to Christ and his ministers. Of the former class were such women as Mary White, of Kent County, Del., in whose house, under the protection of her noble husband, Asbury found an asylum from the storm of persecution raised against him for two years, during the Revolutionary War, — "a woman of rare talents, of remarkable but modest courage, and of fervent zeal;" of whom Benjamin Abbott says, "She came to me, as I sat on my horse, and took hold of my hand, and exhorted me for some time. I felt very happy under her wholesome admonitions." And Thomas Ware says, "She was a mother in Israel, in

very deed." Like to her was Mrs. Ann E. Bassett, of Dover, Del. Her house was one of the homes of all the Methodist preachers of those days. Another of these noble women was Prudence Gough, of Perry Hall, near Baltimore. No resort was more common and more welcome to the preachers than this. Here the guests of her hospitality, Asbury and Coke and a few others, spent some days preparing the business for the Christmas Conference, in 1784. A faithful historian says of her, "Take her altogether, few such have been found on earth. It mattered not who was there, when the bell rung for family devotions, if no male person was present, she would read a chapter, give out a hymn, — which was often raised and sung by the colored servants, — after which she would engage in prayer." Another of this class of women was Mrs. Russell, wife of Gen. Russell, of the Holstein country. Many of the preachers have recorded the acts of kindness and the welcome that they received at her house. Her mansion was always open for the wayworn itinerants. "Her house was a light-house shining afar among the Alleghanies." One more of these notable women, who greeted the preachers with a warm reception and a smile, was Eleanor Dorsey, wife of Judge Dorsey, of Western New York. "The Genesee Annual Conference held its session no less than three times at her house, and she has been known to entertain thirty preachers during its session."

But such instances, where Methodist itinerants were the guests of affluence, and where piety reigned in palaces, were very rare, and were made more notable because they were so few. The Methodists were a poor people, and the homes of the itinerants were more com-

monly in humble dwellings or log-cabins than in mansions; but the welcome of the weary preachers was nevertheless a hearty one, and the preparations for their entertainment the best that the means of the giver, and that love, could supply. How often the only bed of the house was vacated, and its usual occupants found a lodging on the floor, to give the itinerant a good rest for the night! How often the best the house could afford was kept in reserve for the time of the preacher's visit, and served to him with many prayers that the blessing of the God of the poor might rest on him and attend his mission! Such "homes," and such godly, loving, serving women, were found on every circuit throughout the domain of Methodism.

But Methodist women united the care of Martha with the devout piety of Mary: they showed their love for Christ's servants by what they did for them, and their love for Christ no less by their waiting, receptive spirit, and their earnest desire to receive from these men their godly counsel and instruction. They knew as well how to pray as how to show hospitality. It was because they were holy that their houses were made cheerful to the itinerants.

How often it is asked, in order to ascertain the quality of any particular church, "Who are the principal men that sustain it? What are their gifts, or means, or religious character?" How rarely, "Who are the chief women?" Yet would not the answer to this last question quite as certainly determine the real religious strength of a church? Is not the piety, efficiency, and power of any Methodist church chiefly determined by the religious quality of its women? They are those who are most punctual at the class; they are those

who are generally most gifted in prayer, whose religious experience is the most clear and assuring, who are the most industrious as religious teachers of the young, and who are most steadfast and persevering in their Christian profession. The women of Methodism have given it a good share of its success; they have been its most zealous laborers, and have helped to maintain its high standard of spiritual life.

It may appear invidious to name any particular Methodist women who have specially proved their right to be called, like Phebe, "succorers of many," or who, like Priscilla, "laid down their own necks" for Christ and his church; for such have been found in every position of society: yet there is one class of women, who, by their special relation to the church, have given distinguished proof that "they labored much in the Lord." We refer to the wives of the early itinerants. Though they have been less published and less known than their husbands, their influence, their piety, and their labors have essentially contributed to give form and beauty to the development and permanence of Methodism.

There was a prejudice, unphilosophical and strange, that amounted to an undercurrent of opposition to married preachers, in the early period of the church. Though it did not prove a positive prohibition of their marriage, it was nevertheless a severe constraint. Whence this prejudice arose we cannot say: it may have come from the unfortunate marriage of Wesley; it may have been from the example of Asbury's celibacy; but more likely it came from the honorable and generous impulses of the preachers, who declined to marry, because they were unwilling to involve others with them in the self-denials and sufferings they had to

endure in the itinerancy. Notwithstanding this prejudice against it, and these reasons, most of the preachers did marry; and they did well to do so. It was a help rather than a hinderance to their ministry. And their wives have been fine specimens of the virtues, the spirit of sacrifice, and of the graces, that have usually adorned the lives of Methodist women.

These itinerants' wives, indirectly at least, contributed to aid the cause of Christ, by their godly influence in making their husbands more joyful in their arduous work. They made the home of the itinerant, though humble, — to which he occasionally gave his "rest-week," — a green spot, to refresh him by its quiet domestic sympathy and love, and sent him forth on each tour of his circuit, inspired by the prayers and blessings of his wife, with a more joyful heart and a more resolute spirit.

It was, however, a union of the many good qualities of these women that made them so decidedly an honor and a blessing to the church; for a Methodist preacher, in the choice of a wife, always had respect to the fact that she might prove a "help-meet" for him. A facetious writer, in describing the characteristics of the wife of an olden-time Methodist preacher, says she was what the old grammarian Murray defines a verb, "To be, to do, and to suffer;" for she had to possess all the virtues, to perform all manner of work, and to endure every kind of trial. Yet she fulfilled, by the grace of God, all these conditions. What a diversity of gifts she must have! First came the entire care of the household; for her husband was absent most of the time, and hers was the work to provide, prepare, superintend, instruct, and be a guide for all the affairs

of the household. Next she had to be, particularly in the region where she lived, a kind of spiritual aide-de-camp of her husband, and, in his absence, to teach the inquiring, to pray with the penitent, to lead a class, or conduct a prayer-meeting, and solve all cases of conscience and discipline. Then she had to be ready to respond to all invitations to visit socially or the sick, and to adapt herself to the various conditions of those inviting her, — making herself at home with the humblest, and be ready to honor and grace her position in the society of the refined and educated, — to become all things to all people, that she might give no offence. She needed the greatest power of physical endurance for the labor required of her; she must practise a rigid economy, and show great tact and industry, to live on her scanty means; she must have inimitable suavity, and great spiritual gifts, to be a substitute for her husband in the affairs of the church. Yet she usually found in the support and guidance of her religion all that was necessary to meet these requisitions.

But that which entitled these "fellow-laborers" of the itinerants to our strongest praise, and made them most worthy of our love, was their devotion to Christ and his church. This devotion made them ready to suffer the untold trials of an itinerant's life. We often call that period the Heroic Age of the church; but the heroism of the preachers' wives was quite equal to the heroism of their husbands. To us, who have entered into the labors of the fathers, and whose lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, it is not easy to comprehend what these women had to endure, or how they suffered from poor tenements, scanty furniture, absent

husbands, and very limited supplies of food and raiment. But we can understand enough of their trials to award them great honor, that, in the midst of all, they maintained a cheerful, unmurmuring heart, an unswerving faith in Christ, and an unyielding devotion to God and his church.

Many books have been written of the incidents and conflicts in the lives of Methodist ministers. Who will write one of the sufferings and virtues of their wives? Such a book would contain narrations of events of heroic endurance, and self-sacrificing zeal and fidelity, stranger than is often found in the fancies of fiction. We will give an instance of the Christian heroism of one of these women, not indeed exceptional, but similar to many that have transpired. We heard it narrated by an aged minister, who occupied a prominent place in the church. He said, "I was, many years ago, on a four weeks' circuit, compassing about two hundred miles. The house where my family resided was more than a mile from any neighbor. I had three children, the oldest about ten years of age. I came home from my circuit with less than two dollars in money; and when, in a few days, I had to leave again for three weeks, I had but five cents remaining, and the supplies in the house for my family were not enough to last a single day. My wife was hundreds of miles from her paternal home, which she had left with its abundance to join me in my itinerant life. I never had a severer trial: my heart sunk within me. I began to think of giving up the ministry, to care for my household. We ate our morning meal, which consisted of roast potatoes, salt, and some rye coffee, and seasoned them with our tears. We knelt down and prayed; and then I ven-

tured to say to my wife, that I should have to locate, and find some work that would furnish us a living. Never shall I forget her look, for it seemed as if what I said would break her heart. But in an instant she replied, firmly, 'No: you must not; you shall not. God will provide.' Twice after I started from home, I turned my horse homeward, purposing to go back; but the words of my wife, 'God will provide,' encouraged me, and I went on. I turned up to a large farm-house, about three miles from my home. The farmer was not a Christian, but a man of generous impulses; and I stated to him my circumstances. He said, 'Go about your work, sir; your wife is right: I will see to your wants.' And he did: my family were well supplied. I had loved my wife before; but her faith in God, and her heroic spirit on that morning, made her, more than ever, the good angel of my destiny. I have been in many straitened places since, and we have lived and labored together for more than thirty years since that time; yet I have never known her to distrust the care of the Lord, or to shrink from any trials through which we have had to pass."

In the early days of Methodism, the means of labor for its female members were confined almost exclusively to the class-meeting, the prayer-meeting, and the love-feast, or to direct personal effort for the conversion of sinners; and in all these ways they were ready to work with all their hearts. The day of distinctive missionary labor, of Sunday schools, of tract distribution, and of many other noble benevolent enterprises, had not come. But the introduction of these agencies opened a wider field for the gifts and efforts of Methodist women. They are now found in every

mission station among the heathen; in every Sabbath school, — a large majority of its teachers; in every house, with tracts in hand, to instruct the ignorant and to warn the vicious. Like Dorcas, they provide garments made by their own hands to clothe the poor; and, in every way that love can suggest, they are — like Mary, early at the sepulchre to embalm her Lord — the first to prove the excellence of piety, by every good word and work.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SECTIONS OF AMERICAN METHODISM,—THEIR ORIGIN, POLITY, AND HISTORY.

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me; for we be brethren."

THERE are nine sects or divisions of the American Methodist family in the United States. To form a correct opinion of Methodism in this country, it is necessary to know how these sects originated, the polity of each, and its history, with its present status.

The members of the Methodist societies, gathered into religious fellowship and co-operation by Embury and Strawbridge, by Wesley's missionaries, and by the native preachers, down to 1784, did not recognize themselves as forming a complete church. They called their associations "societies," and held themselves subject to Wesley's direction as a branch, or part, of his "connection" in England. The results of the Revolutionary War, giving political independence to the United States, made it desirable, if not necessary, that the Methodists of the States should also be free from the jurisdiction of the Wesleyan body; and, as we have fully noticed elsewhere, the means adopted to secure this resulted, in 1784, in the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, with all the functions, laws, and officers of a distinct and independent ecclesiastical body.

The chief features of this church organization, differing from the Wesleyans, were the adoption of an episcopal form of government, vesting the power of appointing the preachers, authority to ordain, and the general superintendency of the church, in its bishops; the creation of the order of elder and of deacon in the ministry; requiring ordination for the office of bishop; and the adoption of a creed, or articles of religion. In other particulars, without essential difference, the economy of the newly-formed Methodist-Episcopal Church was the same as the Wesleyans. As the necessity of the comparatively inchoate church required it, there were other fundamental rules adopted, — there was organized a General Conference, with supreme authority in the church. The ministers of a given district of country were made an Annual Conference, with specified judicial and executive functions; the Quarterly Conference of each circuit or station was created, with a local authority in the affairs of the circuit. Presiding elders — the bishops' aide-de-camps — were appointed to the official supervision of a specified number of circuits; and, finally, the General Conference was made to consist of a given number of delegated preachers, with original authority, restricted by certain constitutional rules.

As thus constituted, and for some years afterwards, the Methodist-Episcopal Church embraced all the Methodists in the United States, and in numbers, influence, and as most generally known, is still *the* Methodist Church of this country.

The first secession from the original or parent body transpired in 1792. It resulted from an attempt, made in the General Conference of that year, to abridge the

prerogative of the bishops in the appointment of the preachers, and originated chiefly with James O'Kelly, a talented and influential preacher of Virginia. The power of the bishop to make these appointments was supreme; and O'Kelly, and with him quite a large number of leading preachers, desired to have it made subject to an appeal to the Annual Conference, if the preacher thought himself injured by his appointment. The discussion of the subject occupied the attention of the Conference for nearly a week. Lee says, "The arguments for and against were weighty, and handled in a masterly manner. There never had been a subject before us that so fully called forth the strength of the preachers." The Conference, by a large majority, decided against the new measure; and O'Kelly, with a number of the preachers influenced by him, withdrew from the church, and left for Virginia, to form a new church corresponding to their views. He had great influence with the preachers and the people in Virginia and North Carolina. He was a man of great ability in the pulpit and in debate, and was an earnest, confident, enthusiastic man in whatever he engaged. He succeeded in disaffecting many of the best Methodists in those States towards the old church. It was a period of great political excitement in the country, and Republicans and Federalists were violently arrayed against each other. O'Kelly took the more popular side, and formed his associates into a church, with the taking title of "Republican Methodists." They professed to adopt the most democratic principles, and laymen and preachers were all to be on the same level. Thousands, either from the Methodist-Episcopal Church or elsewhere, joined them; and at first they promised to soon become a great and

influential church. They succeeded also in dividing or destroying many of the old societies. But the cohesive element in the new ecclesiastical association was too weak to preserve the integrity of the "Republican" church, and they became in a short time divided among themselves. The success of the movement did not come up to the high sound of its manifesto; and in 1801, nine years after its organization, the first secession from the Methodist-Episcopal Church changed its laws and and title to "The Christian Church," renouncing all rules of church government but the New Testament as interpreted by every man for himself; and, in ten years more, the followers of O'Kelly were so few as hardly to be known, or were at most without influence, in all the regions where they first started with such great promise. For nearly a quarter of a century after the withdrawal of O'Kelly and his associates, the parent Methodist Church was unaffected by any movement to induce its members to secede from its jurisdiction.

Methodism, from its commencement in America, was the friend of the colored race. Its itinerants, more than any other Christian teachers of the land, devoted themselves to the interests of this despised class; and thousands of them were converted through the instrumentality of Methodist preachers. In nearly all the principal cities of the Union, there were churches erected, principally by the contributions of white people, for the exclusive use of the colored; and church organizations were attached to them under the pastoral care of a regular itinerant. In 1816 there were over *forty thousand* colored members of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in the United States. For some time previous

to this year, there began to be felt in some of these churches, especially in Philadelphia, a suspicion that they were not receiving the attention from the white portion of the church that they deserved; and with it came the belief that they would be more prosperous if organized in a church government peculiarly their own. These suspicions and this belief were increased by the efforts of Richard Allen, a colored man, and an ordained local elder of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. In that year he and many others, in and around Philadelphia, seceded from the Methodist-Episcopal Church, and organized themselves into a separate body, with the name of "The African Methodist-Episcopal Church." The seceders elected and ordained Allen for their bishop. The doctrines and government of this church are almost identical with the mother church; and the only practical difference between the two is that the new church is composed exclusively of colored members. The African Methodist-Episcopal Church has increased in numbers, and is now the largest denomination of this exclusive class in the United States. It has more than *five hundred* travelling preachers, more than *two thousand* local preachers, and more than *fifty thousand* church members.

Many of the colored members of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in New-York City did not sympathize or unite with the movement of Allen and his associates, and in 1819 there were over a thousand in that city still members of the old church. A similar disaffection arose among those that had produced the Allenite secession; and they; too, resolved to be independent, and organized "The African Methodist-Episcopal Zion Church."

It professes the same doctrines, and has the same form of government, with the other "African" organization, with the exception that its bishop or superintendent is elected annually, and is not ordained. It has prospered, and been instrumental in doing much good. It has organized churches in nearly all the cities of the free States, and, since the abolition of slavery, is laboring with considerable success among the freedmen of the South. It reported last year *two hundred and seventeen* travelling preachers, *four hundred and forty-four* local preachers, and over *thirty thousand* church members.

The next formal secession from the Methodist-Episcopal Church, and the organization of a new one, transpired in 1830. It originated in a movement, begun as early as 1820, to introduce laymen into the General Conference. In 1824, the advocates of the measure met in Baltimore, and formed a Union Society for the purpose of agitating a change in the government of the church, and recommended the friends of the change to form similar societies elsewhere. A periodical, called the "Mutual Rights," was established in the interest of the "reformers;" in November, 1827, a general convention was called of all the friends of the movement, to prepare a united petition to the General Conference the ensuing spring. The petition was presented, but received an unfavorable answer. In 1830, a convention was called at Baltimore, which adopted a constitution, and book of discipline, and organized "The Methodist-Protestant Church." Its members were mostly from the Middle States, — a few only from the extreme South or West, and scarcely any from the North. The principal difference in this new church, from the Methodist-Epis-

copal Church, consisted in the rejection of the episcopacy, and in the composition of its General Conference, which meets once in seven years, and is composed of an equal number of clerical and lay delegates; one of each of these being chosen for every thousand communicants. The functions of the General Conference thus composed, and of the Annual and Quarterly Conferences also, are very nearly the same as those of the parent church. The chief exception to this is that the Annual Conference of the newer organization has authority to station its ministers. In other respects, — in doctrine, in the form of worship, in classes, and in the appointment of leaders and stewards, — the economy of the two churches is the same. In its beginning the "Protestant" organization numbered *eighty-three* ministers, and about *five thousand* members: some of these, both lay and clerical, had been prominent and active members of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. For a few years the new organization was quite successful, its members increased rapidly, and it formed churches in the West and in the South. For the last twenty years the denomination has not kept up the ratio of increase with the former years.

The Methodist-Protestant Church has been virtually divided by the agitation of the subject of slavery. Its non-slaveholding Conferences, by a convention, prayed the General Conference of 1858 to banish slavetrading from the church. The response of the General Conference not being favorable to their wishes, the antislavery Conferences, numbering nineteen, met in convention at Springfield, Ohio, the following November, and declared "that all official connection, co-operation, and official fellowship with such Conferences and churches within

the Methodist-Protestant Association as practise or tolerate slaveholding or slavetrading, be suspended until the evil complained of be removed." This action was regarded by the Southern Conferences as revolutionary; and the church was in fact, if not in legal form, divided. The condition of the Southern portion of this church was seriously damaged and its members scattered by the late civil rebellion, and those members and ministers residing out of the rebellious States form almost the entire body of the Methodist-Protestant Church. The latest reports give the denomination *eight hundred and ten* travelling ministers, *seven hundred and fifty* local ministers, and more than *one hundred thousand* church-members. It has also a board of foreign and domestic missions; two book-concerns, — one at Baltimore and another at Springfield, Ohio; seven colleges, — three of which are for females, — two other literary institutions, and four weekly periodicals.

In 1843, The Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America was organized, chiefly by members seceding from the Methodist-Episcopal Church. The reasons alleged for this organization were the position of the old church in respect to slavery, the arbitrary power exercised by high officers of the church and by the General Conference in suppressing free discussion on moral questions, and that the church was not strict enough in excluding its members for the sale and use of intoxicating drinks. The first of these was the primary and real cause of the secession; the second was a collateral issue that originated during the discussion regarding the first; and the third was an appendix. The revival of the discussion in the Methodist-Episcopal Church on

the subject of slavery began in 1834. In that year there was issued an "Appeal against Slavery," by a number of ministers of the New-Hampshire and New-England Conferences. This called forth a counter appeal. The next year, resolutions were introduced into the New-Hampshire Conference, condemning slavery in the strongest terms. The presiding bishop refused to put the motion made to adopt them, and this originated the question of "Conference rights." Similar resolutions were introduced into a few other Conferences, and treated in a similar way by the presiding officer. The discussion of the subject of slavery, meanwhile, became quite public through the Eastern organ of the church, published at Boston, and an independent journal, published for the purpose, in New York. Many of the members of the Eastern and Northern Conferences sympathized with the movement against slavery, and their number was constantly increasing, when the General Conference assembled in Cincinnati, in 1836. During the session of this Conference, some of its members attended and addressed an antislavery meeting held in that city; and the Conference, by resolutions, condemned both their attendance at the meeting and the general movement of what was called "Abolitionism," and issued a pastoral address, disclaiming "any right to interfere in the political relation of master and slave." This attempt to suppress discussion on the subject, and also the action of some of the Annual Conferences to deprive their members of their sacred functions for doing so, only widened the breach between the two parties, and made the conflict more undisguised. Disaffection towards the church naturally arose from such severe measures, and the controversy, mingled with considerable feeling,

continued for several years. The greater part of the antislavery men, though decided in their opposition to slavery, were opposed to leaving the church because of its action adverse to them or their opinions, and believed it their duty to remain in it for the purpose of making it more antislavery in its sentiment and action. There were others, however, who believed it their duty to secede; and a number of these met in convention in Utica, in 1843, and formed the Wesleyan-Methodist Connection. The principal rule adopted in this new organization was that respecting slavery, — excluding from church membership or Christian fellowship all who were in any way involved in slavery, or who claimed the right to be. In doctrines, it adopted substantially those of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. The government of the Wesleyan Connection is democratic, each church having power to act for itself. Ministerial equality is a fundamental idea in its polity. It is non-episcopal; and its General Conference, composed of an equal number of ministers and laymen, elected by the Annual Conferences, has power to make rules for the whole connection. It formed no churches in the slaveholding States. Its churches are generally small, and sparsely distributed through the country, particularly in the Eastern States. It reported last year *two hundred and thirty-six* travelling and *one hundred and sixty-four* local preachers, and over *twenty-five thousand* members. The connection has increased but little in numbers for several years. During the present year, many of its principal ministers — some of them the original founders of the denomination — have returned to the communion and service of the Methodist-Episcopal Church; alleging, as a reason, that, as they left it only because

of its unsatisfactory position on the subject of slavery, there is no reason why they may not consistently return to it, now that it has become as antislavery in sentiment and practice as they can desire. The promise of the future increase and usefulness of the Wesleyans is not very flattering.

It will be seen, that, in every secession that we have noticed, the seceding party had, at least, some plausible reason to desire a change in the parent church, respecting the things that gave it offence. The Methodist-Episcopal Church has so far confessed this, that it has modified its government or administration in each particular that was alleged to be offensive. The appointing power of the bishop, though in the letter it remains solely with him, is nevertheless practically under the advice and direction of his council, — the presiding elders; and, in most cases, the appointments are anticipated by mutual arrangement between the preachers and people. Within a few years the General Conference has provided for Conferences composed exclusively of colored preachers, to whom is committed the pastoral care of churches of their own color; and it cannot be long before all the privileges of representation now enjoyed by the other Conferences will be given to these. The right of laymen to representation in the councils of the church is already in a measure conceded, in the part they are called to take in much of the financial action of the Annual Conferences; and there are movements now in progress, with a certainty of success, that will soon introduce them into the General Conference. The position of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, in respect to slavery, immediately following the secession of the Wesleyans, and since that event, has been radically

different from what it was for some years previous to it. So that, whatever fate has attended those who left the church, the reaction from these movements upon the church itself has been decidedly reforming. How much more so it would have been, had they remained in the church, and with moderation and prudence contributed to the reform, may not be easily determined. The history of these secessions, however, has taught us this lesson, that it is not easy to build up a Christian sect or denomination upon a single dogma, or by giving prominence to the excellence of any particular moral act, or on some specific form of ecclesiastical administration. When any one of these is made the ruling idea in the formation of a church, a kind of "hobby" theme, controlling all others, the members of such associations usually become narrow in their views on other subjects and duties, and the church itself can, at best, have but a limited measure of the confidence of the public mind. It seems as if such have been the results that have attended all the seceding organizations to which we have referred.

The last and greatest secession from the Methodist-Episcopal Church was consummated in May, 1845, in the organization of the Methodist-Episcopal Church South. The Wesleyans seceded, because the church was too lax in its discipline respecting slavery; this one, because it was too stringent or severe. Methodism has always been successful as an ecclesiastical power in the South, and at the time of this secession was the ruling church in numbers and influence in the slaveholding States. As we have stated elsewhere, the ministers and members of that portion of the church, at that time, were

generally defenders of the institution of slavery, either as a benevolent system, or as a necessity. Through their influence, the General Conference, in 1840, passed a resolution, asserting "that mere ownership in slave-property, in States or territories where the laws do not admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom, constitutes no legal barrier to the election or ordination of ministers to the various grades of office known in the ministry of the Methodist-Episcopal Church." The application of this resolution was soon to be tested. In the Conference of 1844, it was ascertained that one of the bishops, residing in the South, had become by marriage a slave-owner. During the four years preceding, the antislavery sentiment of the Northern portion of the church had become more decided, and been more openly expressed than previously; and at this Conference it was resolved that the bishop should free himself from this impediment, or cease to exercise the functions of his office. Against this action, all the members of the South protested; and the representatives of thirteen Conferences presented a declaration, "That a continuance of the jurisdiction of the General Conference over the Annual Conferences, thus represented, would be inconsistent with the success of the Methodist ministry in the slaveholding States." To relieve the matter, the General Conference adopted what was called "A plan of separation," by which was provided an amicable arrangement of boundary lines and a fair division of church property, should the Annual Conferences in the slaveholding States find it necessary to unite in an ecclesiastical connection distinct from the Methodist-Episcopal Church. The church in the South and South-west, in primary

assemblies and in Quarterly and Annual Conferences, sustained the declaration of its delegates; and measures were immediately adopted for the assembling of a convention to consummate the secession. This convention met in Louisville, Ky., in May, 1845, and created a separate ecclesiastical connection, with the title of the "Methodist-Episcopal Church South." The first General Conference of the organization was held at Petersburg, Va., the following year; and the discipline and existence of the church fully established. Bishop Soule, the senior bishop of the Methodist-Episcopal Church; and Bishop Andrew, from whose complication with slavery the secession originated, — attached themselves to the new church. The doctrines, and form of government, adopted by this organization were the same as those of the church from which they had separated. This secession, as it embraced more in numbers, and took with it all that was known as Methodism in a large portion of the country where it prevailed, and as it affected extensively the minds of the people in favor or against the agitating subject of slavery, was far greater in its influence than any former one. In fact, the result of it, on the political as well as religious relations of the North and South, was so well understood by John C. Calhoun, a leading statesman of the South, that he said, on hearing of the action of the General Conference of 1844 in reference to separation, "That is the entering wedge to the division of these States." How nearly his prophetic words came to being fulfilled! Separated from all alliance with an antislavery membership, and free from constraint in its action on the subject of slavery, the church "South" soon swept from its discipline all that seemed to condemn the institution. Its

ministers, in order to justify their act of secession, very naturally became the leading apologists or defenders of the system; and, when the great contest came, and rebellion was justified, and actually attempted to maintain the sacredness and inviolability of "the chief corner-stone" of the South, — the system of slavery, — there was no class of men, in any ecclesiastical organization, more ready and zealous than they to defend and aid the Rebellion.

How often, as one calls to mind the conduct of the early fathers of Methodism in their condemnation of the practice of slavery, saying that they held it "in deepest abhorrence;" and contrasts it with that of some of their professed followers in the South in later years, defending the system by the golden rule, and falling at last ingloriously in its defence, — he is reminded of the history of "Balaam, the son of Beor," who, true to the teachings of the Spirit, said of Amalek, as the fathers said of slavery, "His latter end shall be that he perish forever;" and, "A sceptre shall rise out of Israel and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth;" but who, tempted by "the wages of unrighteousness," allied himself to Balak and Moab, and was found at last on the battle-field, with the Midianites, slain by Israel with the sword!

The Methodist-Episcopal Church South began its career with great promise of success, and, until the great Rebellion, increased rapidly in numbers and resources. It had then more than *twenty-seven hundred* itinerants, and more than *five thousand* local preachers, and over *seven hundred thousand* members. It had a missionary organization, chiefly confined to the home work, and its receipts in 1859 were over *two hundred thousand*

dollars. At that time its educational department consisted of *twelve* colleges, *seventy-seven* academies, and about *eight thousand* students. It had also a large publishing house in Nashville, Tenn., with depositories for the sale of its publications in most of its Annual Conferences. It had eight weekly religious papers, published in different sections of the connection; one "Sunday-school Journal," one "Ladies' Magazine," and one "Quarterly." But the Rebellion made great havoc with the church and its agencies. Nearly *two hundred thousand* of its members were slaves, and only a small portion of these, when freed, remained attached to it; its churches, in many places, were scattered by the devastation of the war; its book concern was totally ruined; many of its colleges and academies were closed, and their students dispersed; its periodicals were mostly discontinued; and, at the close of the war, the church was like an army after a terrible and disastrous fight, — with the slain, the wounded, and the demoralized more numerous than those who escaped the conflict unharmed. Since the close of the war, the church has been chiefly engaged in rallying and reorganizing its members and institutions. This work is now so incomplete, and the influence of new questions affecting the constitution of the church is still so undecided, that what is really the present state, and what will be the future position and power, of the Methodist-Episcopal Church South, remains an unsolved problem.

There are two sects of Methodists in the United States, not seceders from the Methodist-Episcopal Church, — the Evangelical Association, commonly known as "Albright Methodists," after the name of their founder; and the Primitive-Methodist Church. The latter is so

inconsiderable in the number of its members, and in its influence, as hardly to be entitled to be mentioned as a distinct church. Its churches are very few and weak, confined to particular localities, and composed almost entirely of emigrants, who were before their emigration attached to quite a respectable religious association of that name in England.

The Evangelical Association is a much more numerous ecclesiastical organization than the Primitives, and is composed mostly of Germans or those of German descent. The church was organized in 1800. It took its rise from the labors of Rev. Jacob Albright, a native of Eastern Pennsylvania, who, being impressed by the general decline of religious life, and the corruption of doctrines and morals that prevailed in the German churches in that region, began, about 1790, to labor for a reform among them. He united his converts into classes and societies. A convention of these, in 1800, solemnly elected and ordained Mr. Albright as their bishop or superintendent; and subsequently the organization then adopted was so modified as to establish Annual Conferences, and ultimately a Quadrennial General Conference. The polity of the church is, with only slight exceptions, like that of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. It has greatly increased in numbers during the last thirty years, and its congregations are found throughout all the Northern and Middle States, except New England. It has eight Annual Conferences, over *four hundred* itinerant and *three hundred* local preachers, and more than *fifty thousand* members. It has two flourishing institutions of learning, — one at New Berlin, Pa., and the other at Greensburg, Ohio; and it issues three periodicals at its publishing house at Cleve-

land. The church is Wesleyan in its doctrines, and strict in its discipline respecting the moral conduct of its members. Its labors are chiefly confined to the Germans.

Such is a brief sketch of the various sections of Methodism in the United States. All of these members of the Methodist family, with the exception of the church South, have within a few years shown a disposition to be brought into more intimate relations and fellowship with each other. The asperities that were naturally felt, by those who were engaged in founding the different sects, towards the parent church, have considerably subsided; and some have even indulged the hope that all these sections of Methodism might be united in one ecclesiastical government. This probably could not be done; probably it is not desirable that it should be. But the spirit of union that prevails will secure to the several branches of Methodism a closer affiliation and co-operation with each other, and all the divisions of the Arminian section of Protestantism in this country will be found laboring harmoniously together for the salvation of the people.

ENG BY F.T.STUART - BOSTON.

Yours respectfully

Peter Cartwright

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OPPORTUNE ADVENT OF METHODISM.

"Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

METHODISM claims to be of God, not only by his ordinary and general permission or supervision of all events, but by his assistance and direction in its own particular history. It claims that the specific work of the Spirit on the hearts of its members, renewing them, and changing them from a death in sin to a life of righteousness, is an oft-repeated attestation of God's presence in the church. It claims that there are unmistakable evidences of the intervention of the divine hand in the peculiar phases of its existence, that this power has accompanied its agencies, and has supported and given succor to its workmen. And it claims also, that the opportune introduction of Methodism, when the condition of the Protestant Church, the moral degeneracy of society, and the peculiar wants of the New World, demanded just such an evangelical movement as Methodism introduced, is sufficient proof that its origin and design was from God.

Without embracing the doctrine of fatalism, that does not recognize a free and willing co-operation of

man with the divine purposes; and, setting aside the infidel sentiment that men are of themselves the sole inventors and executors of what is accomplished in the reformation of society,—Methodism believes in the Bible truth, that God works in men while they work out his great designs of human salvation, as well in great movements affecting the character of nations as in individual salvation. Methodists believe, that, because the mother of Moses showed her faith in God, in hiding her son from the execution of the king's decree, God rewarded her faith by choosing that son to be the deliverer of his oppressed people, at a time when their afflictions were so great as to demand his special intervention. They believe that Cyrus was free in the exhibition of qualities which made him a proper instrument to execute the Divine designs; yet God said of him, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid." They believe, that, though Luther was free in the exercise of a faith that justified the ungodly, God acknowledged his faith by making him "his anointed," and appointing him his chosen one to introduce the great Reformation, just when the abominations of popery imperatively called for the divine arm to be revealed. So Methodists believe that the Wesleys and Whitefield were voluntary in their obedience to the Spirit that brought them into the knowledge of God's favor, and that led them out to Kingswood and Moorfields to preach the gospel to the poor; but that God signally honored their obedience by appointing them as his chosen servants to begin the grand evangelical movement of the eighteenth century, and that he did

this at the time when he saw that the salvation of a degenerate church and the necessities of a spiritual religion required it. Hence Methodists claim, that, while God has been with the itinerants, making their word the power of God unto salvation, and has graciously directed the minds of the leaders of Methodism to adopt measures that have proved an efficient evangelical working system, he has also been introducing, by all these, a grand reforming agency, to fulfil his gracious designs, and an agency, too, of inestimable value, because it met the imperative necessities of the age.

As the measure and merit of Methodism are not to be determined by the labors of any one man, — even of Wesley or Asbury, — so they are not be decided by its success in any particular community, or upon any specific class of subjects, or by any limited period of its history. Such a judgment would be altogether too narrow in its comprehension. The wisdom of the architect of the temple was seen as each stone was prepared for the place it was to fill, but every stone found its place of beauty or strength as it formed a part of the grand plan of the whole building. So, as we sit over against Methodism, and admire the beauty of its particular stones, — of any one of its instrumentalities, — we will more admire the perfection and harmony of the whole system, the wisdom of that Providence that arranged each part in its appropriate place, and the wise design of the Great Architect in devising a church so complete, to accomplish his evangelical purposes. Our attention will be chiefly arrested by the adaptation of Methodism to restore spiritual life to a nominal and formal Christianity, to correct the evils

and avert the perils of popular and wide-spread infidelity, to reform the demoralized lives of the people, to bring to the poor and neglected masses a gospel of power and of love; and we shall admit its opportune advent to be a healthful and saving religious agency to direct the destinies of the great American people.

There is a sense in which it may be said that Methodism was sent "in the fulness of time." Not that the world was expecting it, nor that the hearts of the people desired its advent; but because every class — saints and sinners — were in need of it, and because it was adapted to meet the exigencies or wants of all. An examination of this fact will enhance our estimate of the value of Methodism itself.

What was the actual condition of the nominal Protestant Church of Great Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century? A faithful writer has described it "as unquestionably the most unevangelical period that had ever occurred in that country since the Reformation was completed in the reign of Elizabeth." The clergy, to whom the people looked as guides in all religious matters, were in every sense unfitted for their sacred office. That preparation most essential of all others, a personal knowledge of the work of God renewing the heart, was a strange experience to them, especially to those of the Establishment. They were not only unable to teach it from a personal assurance of its reality, but they denied the truth of this experience, or the possibility for any to know it. The most of their teachings was respecting the virtue of forms, the authority of the church, and the value of an orthodox creed. The religious experience or spiritual life of the clergy of the dissenting churches was scarcely much better than

of those of the National Church. They generally held to the tenets of Calvin; but many of them "preached a gospel, if gospel it may be called, in which the great truths of Christianity had little or no place." It was so modified by the "light of nature," as they called it,—and that excluded the great practical truths of depravity, the atonement, justification by faith, and the offices of the Holy Spirit,—as to furnish no motive for repentance, and to excite no desire in their hearers to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" The same writer says, "Among the dissenters there was a great decay of spiritual religion, arising perhaps partly from the very high Calvinism which some of them maintained, but chiefly from the unevangelical ministry which had been introduced among them." Such was the condition of all the clergy of England, respecting their teaching and their knowledge of an experimental religion.

Their lives were generally such as to reproach the Christian name, and such as to induce the people to hold them in contempt. Archbishop Secker says, "Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teachers of it without any at all." Southey says, "The clergy had lost that authority which may always command at least the appearance of respect; and they had lost that respect also by which the place of authority may sometimes be so much more worthily supplied." Burnet observes, that, in his time, "the clergy had less authority, and were in more contempt, than those of any other church in all Europe; for they were much the most remiss in their labors, and the least severe in their lives." The description given of the religious state of the laity is no more encouraging or flattering than that of the clergy. Secker says,

"Piety is strangely lost, even among persons that are otherwise tolerably serious. Many have laid aside all appearances of it." Perhaps the best exposition that can be given of the real state of the church, especially as regards the necessity of a spiritual life to true Christianity, may be found in the almost universal rejection of the Wesleys and Whitefield when they began to preach it: the doors of the churches were closed against them, and not unfrequently the clergy were the most active of their opposers.

To this picture of demoralized Christianity, in its faith and life, we must add the great immorality of the people. All writers who have spoken concerning this, represent the lives of the English people at that time as fearfully corrupt. One says, "The dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal."

That which made the immorality of the people still more fearful and open was the general prevalence of infidelity, especially in the educated and upper classes of society. At this period the pernicious writings of all the noted infidel authors were extensively and openly read in England, more than they had been in former times. They gave an infidel character to the common literature of the age. They corrupted the religious opinions of the universities, and introduced sentiments of semi-infidelity and rank heresy into the writings of many English divines. In fact, so corrupted were the leading minds of the nation by atheism or infidelity, that the Bible, and especially all parts of it that referred to the supernatural, was treated as a

fable, and unworthy the belief of any but the ignorant, the credulous, or the superstitious.

The most fearful phase of the English nation, in regard to morals or religion, was the degraded, ignorant condition of the common people. These form, in all countries, the great majority of the communities, and from these usually come all religious reforms. Neither the church nor civil authority made any special efforts to remove the ignorance, or to reform the lives, of this class of the population. The miners of Cornwall and Kingswood, the infatuated crowds that everywhere persecuted Wesley and his lay preachers, and the multitudes that flocked to Moorfields and Kensington Common, were real representatives of a large part of the common people of England. Before the dawn of the Wesleyan Reformation, they could say with truth, "No man careth for my soul."

The Methodist movement had to contend with all these formidable hinderances to its success. It had to overcome and remove all these opposing influences to a pure and scriptural Christianity. Without patronage or wealth or social position, it went to the poor and ignorant masses, and said to them, "To you is this salvation sent;" and they listened to the words of promise as divinely sent; and Methodism changed the entire moral condition of the common people of the kingdom. From a demoralized, swearing, drinking race, they became orderly and sober. It taught them also how to pray, as well as how to live. It rebuked an indolent, arrogant, and godless clergy, and said to them, "Woe unto you, ye blind guides!" Its rebukes prevailed, and "a great company of the priests were obedient unto the faith." It declared to the infidel the certainty of a

gracious experience of the "truth as it is in Jesus," and said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Like Dagon before the ark of God, infidelity, confounded and abashed, fell prostrate to the power of an experimental religion, and many of the unbelieving burnt their "infidel books." It permeated the churches, — Dissenting and Established, — and made them spiritual, evangelical, and active in individual or associated efforts for the spread of the Word. It reversed the whole order and policy of the religious sects of the kingdom, who, instead of attempting to support their religion mainly by orthodoxy of opinion or canonical forms, devoted themselves to maintain religion through the improving influence of a godly experience and a holy life. Methodism not only proved the efficacy of a conscious renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit to meet every want of the soul, but it showed its power to overcome every opposing influence to a pure Christianity, and that its advent was opportunely and divinely directed to meet the great emergent demand of the English nation.

The time will come when writers of American history will give credit to Methodism for a more prominent agency in the civil and religious development of this country than they have hitherto done. Hardly one of them has made any account of it, and none of them have given it a tithe of the credit it deserves. Whatever other means combine to favor or embarrass the prosperity of nations, all history affirms that the character of their religion is the most potent and controlling influence to make a people great and prosperous, or weak and degenerate. This universal law has been

distinctly illustrated in the history of the American people. The general character of the nation, its form of government, its enterprise, and its moral condition, are mainly the formations of its religious agencies. The introduction of Methodism was at a time when the wants of the nation demanded just such characteristics in its religion as Methodism supplied.

First of all, there was great need of a religion of the heart, — a religion that was nothing less than regeneration, wrought in man by the power of the Holy Ghost.

That this was not the character of much that professed to be Christianity, at the introduction of Methodism in America, is without dispute. The various sects that were established were representatives of the Protestant Reformation, and, so far as the letter of Protestantism could affect the formation of the State, had done much to prepare the future nation for its coming greatness: they had formed churches, established schools, and enacted laws that were based on the moral code of the Bible. The social state of the community was in a great measure the result of these provisions; nevertheless, there was a lack of the higher and more efficient control of a power to influence beyond the letter of the statute through a spiritual and renovating influence that first made the tree good that its fruits might be good also. The professedly religious portion of the country lacked experimental godliness: theirs was more a religion of word and of statute. By one or two "great awakenings," and through the preaching of Whitefield, there had been powerful revivals in some parts of the country; but these had failed to give to the churches a permanent belief in the necessity of regeneration as a qualification for the ministry or member-

ship of the church, and they had lapsed into a condition where their principal teachers and a large majority of the ministry denied the necessity of conversion for the sacred office or for admission to the Lord's Supper. A few of their number — among whom were the Tennants — contended strenuously against their unscriptural views; and one of them, in a sermon on "The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry," said, "The body of the clergy are as great strangers to the feeling experience of the new birth as was Nicodemus." The four principal sects of the country — the Puritans, the Presbyterians, the English Church, and the Dutch Reformed Church — agreed that a consciously regenerate state was not essential to membership or official position in the church. Revivals of religion, such as had prevailed under the labors of Whitefield, Edwards, Davenport, and others, were denounced; and the chief colleges — Harvard and Yale — published their "Declarations" against them. The result of such opposition to an experimental Christianity was, according to the author of "The Great Awakening," that "the difference between the world and the church was vanishing away, church-discipline was neglected, and the growing laxness of morals was invading the churches."

Methodism was needed at this time, to lift up its voice and cry aloud to the churches, "Ye must be born again;" to arrest this degeneracy in religious life, and say to both the ministry and the membership, "Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." This was its chief mission to them. How extensively and radically it affected them, time has proved. Most of the churches then existing have since become partakers of a new religious life, and those who have been the greatest recip-

ients of it have been the most growing and prosperous of those churches.

The churches of America, at the time of the introduction of Methodism, needed reformation in their creed as well as in their religious experience. They were Calvinists; and their "doctrines of grace," as they were by a strange misnomer called, were working disastrous results in a variety of ways. The rankest form of Calvinism prevailed in New England, and among the Presbyterians of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The chief themes of the pulpit were the divine decrees of election and reprobation, with their kindred doctrines of human inability, and the final perseverance of the saints. As has always been the effect of such preaching, an apathy corresponding to the creed prevailed among the churches, and a stoical indifference to religious duty among the people. Fatalism, that is the best definition of the Genevan theology, destroyed that sense of responsibility that is always aroused in men by a belief in the doctrines of free grace. The churches were wanting in the spirit of enterprising diffusiveness, — a spirit that always accompanies the preaching of Arminianism. They needed that Methodism should come, with its itinerancy and energy, with a "free, a present, and a full salvation;" and say to them, "To him that hath shall be given," and lead them in working out their salvation, by showing them how to work for the salvation of others.

Calvinism produced another fearful evil. The "horrible decrees" were too abhorrent for human belief. They found no support in the Word of God, in reason, or in human experience; and the intelligent portions of the people were passing from one extreme to the other,—

from faith in the doctrines of Calvin to a belief in Pelagianism, to denying the necessity of any divine aid for a religious life, or to embracing the not less absurd doctrines of infidelity. The common people were fast becoming scorners of a religion that even an ordinary mind could see was inconsistent with human freedom, and that absolved them from all obligation to obedience. Infidel writings were extensively circulated and read in every class of society. Infidelity — the alternative of Calvinism — was the great peril of the American people, towards the close of the last century. To meet all these perils from Calvinism, Methodism came with its doctrines of universal redemption, and taught the gracious ability of every man to repent, and believe the gospel. It declared that he that believeth not is condemned, and that he that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself. It was a life-boat for the thousands that were in peril of shipwreck from the horrors of Calvinism and its alternative. The effect was as might have been anticipated: it changed the avowed theology, at least as to its avowal in the pulpit or in private belief, of every church of the land; and practical Arminianism, as taught by Wesley and his followers, became the popular theology of the American churches.

Methodism had another work to do, in reforming the American churches: it had to show the superiority of a church independent of the patronage or the support of the State. Nominally, most of the American churches had a pseudo-alliance with the civil authority of the provinces, and all of them were solicitous for its favor. Strange as it may seem, many of the emigrants who had sought the American shores to enjoy liberty of conscience and freedom to worship God did not wholly re-

pudiate the idea, so universal in the Old World, that the church must have some connection and joint tenancy with the State. In New England, the parish and the town were legally joined, so that the franchise and offices of the latter could only be enjoyed by those who were members of the former; and the civil law provided that every taxable inhabitant should pay for the support of the parish church. Though it was municipal, it was universal; and Congregationalism was in fact as much the religion of the State in New England as the Establishment was in England. The English Church in Virginia, previous to the Revolutionary War, held a relation to that province very similar to that held by a Puritan Church to the town in which it was located. All the larger churches of the colonies were disposed to make the State a patron. Methodism adopted a different policy. It saw that where such a relation of Church and State existed, in form or in spirit, the Church was weakened in its independence and its purity. It began without the special favor of civil law, and often had, in its feebleness, to suffer persecution by the sanction of law; but it never swerved from its integrity or independence to seek the patronage of the civil power, and it demonstrated in this country the great efficiency of a church thus independent, and brought about a great change in the sentiments of the American people respecting the true relations of a Church to the State. Many years have passed since every Church of the land has been severed from all legal or statute alliance with the civil government.

Methodism has proved how opportunely it was introduced into this country, by its adaptation, both in spirit and agencies, to meet all the religious wants of

the newly-formed American nation. The close of the Revolutionary War brought into the family of nations one whose political principles and whose popular government was professedly in advance of all the others. It was republican in form, and democratic in its spirit. It believed in the personal freedom and civil equality of all its citizens. It held every man responsible to the law for a consistent use of the freedom he enjoyed. Progress or improvement was a leading idea of the American people. A seven years' war had educated and disciplined the nation to a hardy and stern use of all its powers, to work out its great expectations of the future. It needed a religion, in its sentiments, its activity, and its hopes, corresponding to the mind and energies of the nation itself. It found that religion in Methodism. The doctrines of the freedom of the will, of a universal atonement, of the equal privilege of all men to be saved, of personal responsibility to obey the divine law, and of the duty of men to advance in the knowledge and practice of holiness, — were all corollaries morally applied, of the political doctrines of the new republic. In respect to these doctrines, Methodism differed from the other sects of the country, and from the old sects of the Old World. The new nation introduced a new epoch in the political governments of the world; and Methodism, congenial in its spirit with the nation, was opportunely at hand to introduce a new epoch, and to begin a new evangelical movement in the progress of Christianity in the world.

It was, furthermore, the peculiarly practical adaptation of its agencies to meet the wants of a rapidly-increasing and widely-spreading people, that made the advent of Methodism so timely, and its work so success-

ful. The announcement of peace, and of the establishment of an independent government, was the signal for emigration to the new and wild regions of the West, — for the beginning of a tide that has continued to flow, until it now covers a domain many times greater than the original States. The increase of population has been beyond the most sanguine anticipations of the credulous, and more rapid than has been known in the history of nations. To the Christian statesman it was a problem, — the solution of which would be sought with some anxiety, — How could all this outspreading people be religiously trained, to fit them and their posterity to be safe and useful members of the body politic? To the Christian philanthropist, there was another problem, — not less serious, nor less important in its solutions, — How could all of them be instructed in the truths of the gospel, and their souls be saved? How could they be made to become devoted Christians, and fellow-citizens with the saints? How could the new communities that they establish be supplied with the ordinances of religion, and become in practice real Christian States? The ecclesiastical structure, and the spirit of Methodism, prepared it to solve this problem; and it entered upon the work of solution just at the period when it was required.

It was not difficult to see what was needed. It required that the gospel, unsought, should be taken to these scattered people, and that the ministry of the Word should not depend on the disposition of the people to call for it. It required a pioneer ministry, with souls filled with the impelling power of the Saviour's commission, "Go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel," to whom sacrifices and hardships would be no impedi-

ment. It required a ministry to go to these new settlements, without previous stipulations for compensation for their services; for the small number in any given locality, and the poverty of the emigrants, would render them unable, even if they were willing, to pledge any such compensation. It required a faithful and earnest extempore style of preaching, that could adapt itself to the humble and rustic state of the settlers, and could declare its message in log-cabins, in private houses, in barns, in the woods, or by the roadside, — a ministry without gowns or written sermons, or dependent on reading prayers. It required that this preaching should be often repeated to preserve its interest, and to deepen its impressions on the minds of the people; and that provision should be made to gather, under some pastoral supervision all those who might become personally interested in their religious welfare, and who should desire to lead Christian lives, and form themselves into churches.

To meet all these requisitions, Methodism was prepared. Three of the prominent peculiarities of its ecclesiastical system were its itinerancy, its lay-preaching, and its class-meetings; and these were the agencies required for a country that was expanding into new territories, and whose population was sparsely settled. How admirably they met the end desired! The circuit of the pioneer itinerants embraced, in hundreds of miles, from twenty to fifty of these thinly populated districts of the new territory or State, to each of which he could preach once, at least, in two or four weeks. He did not require any stipulations for pay for his services, but received cheerfully the hospitality of those to whom he ministered, and the small gift-offerings that

love might make for his limited necessities. The impelling command of his master, to preach the Word, would not allow him to wait for invitation to come; but he was ready to lift the latch, and open the door and enter, wherever he did not find it barred against him. Those who were converted by his ministry were readily cared for. The class-meeting and the class-leader formed at once an incipient church organization, to maintain weekly religious services, and provide for pastoral care of the sheep introduced into the fold, and to constitute them, as they increased, a permanent, thriving church. Among these converts, there were always found some who, with zealous, gifted minds, were moved to call sinners to repentance. These men, settled in their residence, but, ready in the Word, became the itinerants' aids, and formed a large force of lay preachers, who without temporal reward, preached to the people the intervening Sabbaths, between the itinerants' appointments, and made the regular services appropriately frequent. By these three appliances, — the itinerancy, the lay preaching, and the class-meetings, made vigorous by the zeal and devotion of those engaged in them, and regulated by a system that moved with a strict adjustment of all its parts, — Methodism provided the means to meet the exigencies, or religious wants, of the rapidly increasing population of the nation. They were means as popular with the people as they were adapted to their end. Wherever the itinerant came, he was welcomed as the messenger of God: his word was received with attentive ears and trustful hearts, and his preaching proved the power of God unto salvation to many. He was found in every part of the nation, from the Aroostook to the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the

western verge of emigration, — even to the Pacific. The labors of these itinerant preachers have done more than any other agency to raise up churches throughout every part of this great republic; and thus have done more to form and to mould the character of the people of these States, by the influence of the gospel, into industrious, sober, intelligent, and prosperous citizens. In view of all these things that we have named, who shall say that the advent of Methodism was not opportune, or that it was not divinely appointed for grand and glorious ends, — that it did not "come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHY METHODISM HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

THAT the great religious movement began by the Wesleys, and known as Methodism, has been successful, can hardly require proof. The evidence of its success, running throughout its entire history, is so palpably plain that incredulity cannot, and hostility to it dare not, deny it. A movement that originated in the unpretending efforts of a simple presbyter of the Establishment, without the approval or patronage of his church, without disciples, without pecuniary resources, and without the support of the State; and spreading itself throughout the entire kingdom and its colonies, throughout the great republic of the western world, and bringing under the direction of its ecclesiastical system, in both hemispheres, more members than are found in any of the oldest Protestant sects, — a movement, that has had more influence in reforming the lives of men, and done more to elevate the standard of Christian experience, than any other church, and that has organized itself into an efficient system for diffusing Christianity through the world, cannot be adjudged otherwise than successful. Whatever views

men may have of the future of Methodism, their verdict respecting the past is sure. There may be, however, some differences of opinion respecting the causes, direct or relative, that have produced this success, that will justify us at this time in the attempt to answer the question, What has given to Methodism such growth and power in the world?

Whatever other causes have contributed to this success, the principal one has been that *God has directed and assisted in the means that Methodism has used to produce such grand results.* It was the presence of God with his ancient people that gave them the victory, and led them to their inheritance: the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night was the assurance and strength of Israel in their journey to the promised land. The promise of Christ to his Church, "Lo I am with you always," was his perpetual pledge of success that inspired them to obey his command, and go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; that he would work with them, and, while they were obedient to his commission, they should not labor in vain. Methodists claim that this promise has been fulfilled to them; and the Lord in the midst of them has been their light, their strength, and their success.

Another and fundamental cause of the success of Methodism, and one to which we have often referred, was *the intensely vital or experimental religion professed and taught:* it was, that Methodism was a revival of primitive religious experience by the renewal of the hearts of its subjects by the power of the Holy Ghost. This renewal of the heart, that it insisted was the plain scriptural requisition for a truly religious

character, corresponded with the conscious want of the souls of men; and when Methodism said to them, "Ye must be born again," and assured them that they might know the reality of the work in them by the witness of the Divine Spirit, its declaration commended itself to every man's conscience, and awoke in them both desire and confidence to seek and prove the experience that was promised them. They could not resist the appeals made to them, to become the subjects of a vital religion. These two cardinal facts, that Methodism had divine assistance and was a personal religious experience, were the chief causes of its success.

But there were other causes besides these, or, properly speaking, growing out of these and not less apparent, and which have been peculiar to Methodism, that have given to it its wonderful growth and prosperity. The most prominent of these we will call *its characteristic spirit.*

When the renewing and enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost affected the disciples on the day of Pentecost, it produced in them an important change in their views of the work of God, and of their duty in regard to it: it showed them that the salvation of the gospel was for all men, and impelled them with intense desire to preach it to all; it infused into them what may properly be called an evangelical spirit. Every Methodist, at his conversion, became the subject of this same change; *and because Methodism has possessed an evangelical spirit, it has been successful.* This spirit is the great moving power of the whole gospel scheme: in fact, its true origin was, God sent his Son into the world to die for it, not because the world

desired or asked the gift, but because his love prompted him to bestow it. The Son gave himself for the ungodly: he was "found of them that sought him not." He sent his apostles and representatives to invite men to come and be saved; and these missionaries went forth, not because they were invited to come by the communities to whom they went, but because they were moved by the love of Christ constraining them to imitate his spirit and example. The great idea of Christianity is that it originated in divine love; and the same love moved all its subjects to declare its gracious purposes to the world, lying in ignorance and wickedness. This is the radical idea of Methodism. How promptly the Wesleys and Whitefield obeyed its impulsions, as soon as they felt "their hearts strangely warmed"! How differently they preached after this from what they did before! This evangelical spirit drove them, when banished from the churches, to the jails and mines and commons, to preach to the prisoners and colliers and the multitudes, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings, — to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," although they knew not one to whom they preached, nor was there one who had invited them or desired them to come. It was the Spirit of God sending them, and not the will of man calling them, that taught Wesley to say, "The world is my parish." This has been the characteristic spirit of Methodism. Every one of his converts, as soon as converted, has said to his neighbor, as Philip said when he found his brother Nathanael, "We have found the Christ:" "come and see;" or has done like the woman at the well near Samaria, who left her water-pot at

the well, and hastened to the city, and called on all, "Come, see the man that told me all the things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" The disciples of Methodism have all been evangelists, not a few of them only, and these few specially commissioned of the church, but every one of them, whatever their former character, their gifts, or their previous social position. John Nelson, the stone-cutter, converted while working at his trade in London, hastened to his home in Birstal, and told his old neighbors what the Lord had done for his soul. Thomas Walsh, living in the midst of a Roman-Catholic population in Ireland, began, as soon as he felt a consciousness of his sins forgiven, to preach to them the power of Christ to save them. John Haime, brought to the knowledge of Jesus in the army, turned at once to his fellow-soldiers, and exhorted them to seek like precious faith. Barbara Heck, moved by her love for her backslidden countrymen in New York, could not restrain her interest in their behalf, and fell on her knees before Embury, and entreated him to preach to them, "lest they all go to hell together." So common were the impelling influences of the Spirit to speak of the excellence of the grace of God, and to exhort sinners to seek it, that faithfulness in doing this was usually considered an evidence of the genuineness of the work of conversion in Methodists,—that they had indeed received the spirit of Christ. Nor was it peculiar to the young convert, affected by the impulses of his early Christian zeal and love: it was the test of his continuance in grace throughout his life. When applied to the Methodist minister, the possession of this evangelical spirit was an indispensable prerequisite for his sacred office. It was not enough that he was educated,

or that he had good natural gifts, or that he was willing to preach to those who called him: he must feel, "Wo is me if I preach not the gospel;" that he was "debtor both to the Jew and Greek:" he must say, in his ordination vows, that "He believed he was called of God to preach the word." The whole itinerant system was constructed to meet this fundamental idea of its policy, that the itinerant was to seek the people, and not wait for the people to seek him. Herein it differed from the policy of all other sects; and because it sought men by the way-side, or in the full city, to the lowest in the scale of humanity, or to the proud and pharisaical, it said, "We come to seek and to save those who are lost," — it possessed the power of its great success.

A true evangelical spirit is not only characterized by its disposition to seek after the lost, but it dictates a peculiar way of putting the truth as the means of saving men. And Methodism was successful *because it sought to save men evangelically:* it sought directly the conversion of men by preaching to them "Jesus Christ and him crucified." Methodism, in the subject and design of its teaching, imitated the example of the apostles and their successors. The apostles kept strictly to one work,—to lead all whom they addressed to a new religious life by faith in Christ. All questions merely speculative; all disputes on dogmatical opinions; every subject foreign to the main one,—the justification of the ungodly, and the sanctification of the believer,—found no place in their preaching. Even Paul, who was, more than any other apostle, qualified to discuss speculative theories in regard to religion, ignored them altogether. He states, in every epistle, the great

object of his apostleship to be to persuade men to be reconciled to God. He expresses his solicitude for this in his prayers, and prays that they may be "sanctified wholly." He exhorts and beseeches men to "present their bodies a living sacrifice to God." No matter whether he preached to the proud Roman or to the bigoted Jew, his theme was the same, — the "gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

How different from this apostolic mode had been the preaching for centuries previous to the advent of Methodism! When Wesley and his lay ministers began to preach, their evangelical messages, calling on men to repent, and believe the gospel, were in strange contrast with the usual addresses of the ministry, both in England and America. The pulpit was most familiar with disquisitions on the creed, or on some dogma of Calvinism, or on the relation of church and state, or respecting the lawfulness of the practice of some questionable morality. Very rarely, indeed, did the people have presented to them the supremacy of Christ, and their need of him as a free, a present, and a full Saviour. They listened to no earnest exhortations, calling on them to repent; no gracious words of encouragement, saying, "To you is this salvation sent;" no mingled promise and warning, that "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The "alpha and omega" of Methodist preaching was, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It said, "Now God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." It taught thus in its preaching, in its prayers, in its exhortations, in its songs, and in all its personal intercourse

with men. It did, indeed, have to sometimes answer the captious questions of its opponents regarding topics that were less profitable, and that would lead to "doubtful disputations;" but its reply to these was mainly such as to exalt the Saviour, and to impress men with the necessity of knowing him in their own hearts.

The effect of this evangelical Methodistic mode of preaching was to make men feel that there was a gospel with which they had something to do; that, while it proposed to renew them in the image of God, it made them responsible to obey its conditions, and aroused their consciences, excited their fears, and encouraged their hopes. The itinerants' message not only interested their hearers, and secured their attention; it did more: it led them to cry out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Every service witnessed the conversions of some who had become penitent, and believed the word. The direct extempore address of Methodist preachers was favorable to the exhibition of this evangelical spirit. They presented the truths of the gospel in the more forcible and affecting manner of speaking, rather than in the embarrassing and inefficient mode of written discourse. This was another contrast to the custom of the pulpit, at the introduction of Methodism. Methodist preaching was extemporaneous: the custom of the clergy was to read. We do not propose to discuss the comparative merits of these two modes of address for preaching the gospel. Methodism adopted the one most congenial with its evangelical spirit, and that was justified by apostolic precedent; the one that was most natural, practical, and effectual in its circumstances, and the best adapted to meet its design. It found that in addressing men on a

subject in which both speaker and hearer are deeply interested, and in the knowledge of which the preacher ought to be thoroughly instructed, a true philosophy and expediency dictated the extempore method. It knew that Jesus and his apostles never read their discourses, and that they were the most convincing and persuasive of any sermons ever delivered; and it adopted the primitive mode. This usage was peculiarly adapted to the exigencies as well as the spirit of Methodism. The itinerant was called to preach in every conceivable variety of circumstances, — in the market-place, the country school-house, the barn, by the way-side, at the camp-meeting, and in private houses, quite as frequently as from behind a cushioned pulpit. Imagine him in any of these places, unrolling his manuscript, and reading a sermon with the text, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach." How tame and unaffecting would be such a sermon under such circumstances! how listless and impatient would be his hearers! Instead of this, he came to the people with his heart full of evangelical fire; with his chief theme and message, "Christ is a Saviour;" and with a direct and extempore manner that gave him freedom and power under any circumstances. The fruits that followed this kind of preaching, compared with those that have been produced by the reading method, are the best evidence of its superiority, and have shown it to be one reason, at least, why Methodism has been successful.

The *brotherly spirit of Methodism* has been another cause of its success. By this we mean, first, that it identified itself with the condition of those whom it sought to save, and, by its sympathies and presence,

sought to encourage and aid them in their salvation. The most convincing evidence that Jesus gave of his real design to save the chief of sinners was his entering into their houses, eating with them, and receiving their kindly attentions. The greatest offence of Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees was his associating with publicans and sinners, healing their diseases, and being their guest. They said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." He treated them with a brother's attention, and identified himself, by his favor and love, with the lowest and the vilest. He stooped down to them that he might lift them up to him. But little of this brotherly way of saving men prevailed in the world or in the church when John Wesley revived it, and went in with the poor and outcast, and ate with them that he might bear to them the bread of life. If the Christianity of that day sought to do good to others, it was chiefly to those who were in a social position corresponding with itself, or in a way that indicated that the work was more patronizing than brotherly: it showed more the spirit of the Pharisee, who thanked God he was not as the Publican, than of Christ, who said to Zaccheus, "To-day I must abide at thy house." It was more like the Priest and the Levite, who passed by on the other side, and left the wounded man that had fallen among thieves to perish, than of the Samaritan, "that had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, and set him on his own beast, and took him to an inn, and took care of him." Hence it was, that what professed to be benevolent efforts to benefit men accomplished so little. They lacked the sympathy and fraternal feeling that is essential to encourage and inspire hope in those who are to be benefited.

Mere patronage can inspire in the minds of the debased but little confidence to attempt reform.

This brotherly spirit was a distinguishing trait of Methodism. It condescended (not as though it was a condescension), and took its place beside the poor and the humble, and pressed its own heart against the heart of the meanest, that by its intimacy it might inspire hope. The guiltiest penitent, whose tears were as free as Magdalene's, found in a Methodist the forgiving, sympathizing, and praying love of a brother, ready to encourage and to cheer him. Methodism introduced such without caste into its classes, and assured them of the full benefits of Christian communion. It adopted the course of the great apostle, and "to the weak it became as weak, that it might gain the weak: it was made all things to all men, that it might by all means save some." This spirit was so marked a feature of Methodism, that, by the Saviour's rule, he that was most devoted in his sympathy and love for the least was accounted the greatest, and was most instrumental in doing good. Such a spirit could not fail of producing corresponding results. The mission of Methodism was to the humble; and the humblest were ready to trust it, because it identified itself with their state. They believed what it said. They were willing to follow its counsels. They knew they had in it a true friend; and thousands, and hundreds of thousands, of the converts of Methodism were led to seek the Saviour by the attractive influences of its brotherly spirit.

Methodists have always been proverbial for their love one towards another. The brotherly spirit that showed itself in compassion and sympathy towards the

unconverted assumed the more intimate and reciprocal manifestation of Christian fellowship as soon as the sinner was converted. For the exhibition of this "fellowship of love," Methodists have a world-wide reputation. They early introduced into their familiar salutations the address of "brother" and "sister," — characteristic of their mutual affection. All the usages of Methodism cherish and countenance this Christian attachment, and, make Methodists, like the early saints, "of one heart and one soul." The weekly social services of the class-meeting, the loving spirit of the love-feast, the prayers one for another at the prayer-meeting, the festival seasons of the quarterly-meeting and of the camp-meeting, intensify the disposition already created by the Spirit of God, and strengthen the bonds of Christian affection. Even the persecutions that Methodists have suffered for their religion have only increased their sympathy and union with each other.

Writers on Methodism have given too little prominence to this brotherly spirit as a cause for the success of the denomination. We know of but few influences, greater than this, that have given to the church its moral power. It has been like the good-tempered mortar to cement all its members, and strengthen the house of faith. It has made the efforts of a few, though their resources have been small, to be vigorous and efficient for the grand Christian enterprises in which they have engaged. It has been an element of cohesion, and saved individual churches from the divisions that would have come but for the affinity of spirit that held them together. It has demonstrated to the world the value of a religion that could join all its subjects in consistent and sacred alliance; and multi-

tudes, who have been inimical to the claims of Christianity, have been compelled to yield their hostility, when they have seen how Methodists have loved one another. This brotherly spirit has been like leaven, diffused through the church, and has given harmony, activity, and success to every means of grace, to every season of worship, and to all the institutions of Methodism.

The success of Methodism has been promoted by the *catholicity of its spirit in respect to opinions, and by its rigid spirit in respect to experience and practice.* Methodism has always distinguished between a man's religion and his creed. It has held that the former consisted in the right state of his heart, illustrated by a godly life, and was fundamental to Christian character. It made the latter to depend much on the former, and never to be a sure test of a real Christian. Hence all the conditions for admission to Wesley societies referred to experience exhibited in practical godliness. In making such terms Wesley adopted the New-Testament plan. It asked every candidate who desired admission, "Do you know Christ as your Saviour?" and "Will you follow Christ as your pattern?" Methodism has its doctrines; and no church ever existed wherein there has been greater unanimity respecting these than among the followers of Wesley. But this unanimity did not arise from any rigid dogmatic tests: it arose rather from the influence of a renewed heart, to teach men what to believe, and to make their views of the truth to correspond. But in respect to practice, or in living holy; in requiring all its members to show that they did indeed "desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," — Methodism has been scrupulously exacting. It

raised high the standard for a godly life, and required all in its societies to come up to it. "By their fruits ye shall know them," was the evidence it required to be given of the genuineness of the piety of all its members.

It found a very different test of what constituted true Christianity existing in the churches. With these the great condition was orthodoxy in faith, according to what was esteemed orthodox in any particular church. A hearty assent to the tenets of a platform or a creed were their chief requisitions for admission and communion. The tests of the heart, especially those requiring an assurance of its renewal by the Holy Ghost, and a corresponding and holy life, were hardly nominal conditions for entrance into the churches. Methodism reversed the order of proof of what constituted a true Christian. Wesley said, concerning "the people called Methodists," "They do not impose, in reference to their belief, any opinions whatever. They think, and let think. One condition, and only one, is required, — a real desire to save their souls. Where this is, it is enough: they desire no more; they lay stress upon nothing else; they ask only, 'Is thy heart herein as my heart? If it be, give me thy hand." Yet Wesley adopted rules and means that were strictly applied to all his people respecting the way they should live. His "General Rules," the only condition of admission to his societies, were specific in mentioning every duty; and the class-meeting, with its weekly examination of the state of its members, was a means of detecting every delinquency in observing them. Methodism was thus a grand movement to make men truly religious, by first making the heart right with God, and by cultivating the fruits of this in a godly life. This was its undivided

object; to this it directed all its energies. Its preaching, praying, singing, and exhortations, its class-meetings, prayer-meetings, love-feasts, and watch-nights, were all employed in securing this end. It was this philosophical as well as scriptural process that gave to Methodism an influence, that made it a success. If sectarians disputed about the five points of Calvinism; if they insisted that men should be immersed, rather than sprinkled with water, in order to be saved; if they assumed that salvation consisted in ordinances administered by men claiming ecclesiastical descent from Peter; if they required a confession of the truths of a particular creed, or that worship should be in any particular form, — Methodism said unto them, "Behold, I show you a more excellent way," and turned on them with the exhortation, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." — "Repent, therefore, and be converted, every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Methodism has been successful because of its *demonstrative spirit.* It has not feared or failed to make known the gracious work of God, by positive, unmistakable, and appropriate demonstrations. Its enemies have said, "The Methodists are a noisy people," and have called them "zealots" and "enthusiasts," in derision, because they exhibited their emotion and their zeal in a decided and expressive manner. That Methodism has been demonstrative cannot be denied. That this has been no reproach to it may be affirmed. Its justification for this is the authority and examples of the Word of God. It is a noticeable fact, that in every act of worship, in every instance of the manifestation of

God to men, in every case of merciful interposition of the divine favor recorded in the Bible, the recipient or the worshipper expressed his feelings of gratitude and love by some significant demonstration. The New Testament, particularly, abounds with these signs of the emotions and impulses of those who were religiously affected. The children of the temple shout their hosannas to Christ; the multitude in the way say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" and when the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Rebuke thy disciples," he replied, "If these should hold their peace, immediately the stones would cry out." The penitent and grateful Magdalene bathed the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; the blind, the lame, and the impotent, healed of their diseases, followed the Saviour, rejoicing and praising God for the cures they had received. Not an instance is found in the Gospels, — except that one of the nine of the ten lepers, who were healed, and returned not to give glory to God, — where the thanks and the worship of the recipient of good is not attended with some demonstrative expressions of delight and gratitude. The newly-organized primitive church manifested the same irrepressible tokens of emotion and love. On the day of Pentecost, the apostles "spake as the Spirit gave them utterance;" the young converts continued daily in the temple in prayers, and in praising God; the lame man healed at the Beautiful gate of the temple, entered in, walking, leaping, and praising God; the converted Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing; the household of Cornelius spake with tongues after the Holy Ghost had fallen on them. In every case, the work of God among the people or in the church, at

Jerusalem or in Samaria, among either Jews or Gentiles, was exhibited in some earnest and declarative way. The religion of the early saints was a demonstrative religion; and Methodism is only a revival of the same. If it addressed the sinner, it said to him, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." And, when his awakened heart inquired what he must do to be saved, it taught him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and when, further, he found the peace that passeth understanding, it said to him, "Declare what great things the Lord hath done for your soul." His testimony would often be strong and emphatic: he might say, "The Lord hath separated my sins as far from me as the east is from the west." Sometimes he would break out, and shout, "Praise the Lord!" — "Hallelujah!" — "Glory!" Nor would these be only the expressions of his joy instant with his conversion. He would go and tell to his neighbors, and to his family, and to all whom he met, that Christ had power on earth to forgive his sins. Such was the way in which Methodist converts announced their new experience; and it was both natural and Scriptural.

The same demonstrative spirit has characterized Methodist worship. When the members of the class came together, it was to speak freely, every one, what was in his heart, and to witness to the grace of God that had saved them. They rejoiced with one another in their hopes, and sympathized with each other in their sorrows: they prayed for each other, and praised the Lord together. The social Methodist prayer-meeting, or love-feast, has been another occasion for the exhibition of this demonstrative spirit. There is in this a freedom for each one to participate in its ser-

vices; there is also that extempore mode of praying, peculiarly adapted to give expression to emotion; the songs that are sung at such a meeting are particularly those that refer to religious experience, and are the lusty praise of the whole company; the testimonies given are respecting the religious state of the witnesses; the exhortations are the earnest appeals of hearts inflamed with love for the salvation of their fellow-men. All the exercises of a Methodist prayer-meeting are demonstrative. The same is true of the public worship of Methodists. If, from its nature, it must be less social, it is not less expressive and declarative of the feelings of the heart. The songs, the prayers, the sermon, all partake of that freedom, and are of that extempore character, that favor and encourage the emotion of the worshippers: sometimes this emotion breaks out in strong expressions. The responsive "Amen," the ejaculations of "Hallelujah!" the suppressed sigh, the flowing tears of joy, the shout of "glory," indicate the overflowing raptures of the people, and demonstrate the power of a religion that intensely affects the heart.

What has been true of Methodists, in their social and public worship, has been true also in their private and individual life. They did not hide their talent in a napkin. They knew and illustrated the meaning of the precept, "Instant in prayer." It was said of them proverbially, "They are always praying." It might as truly have been said, "They are always singing;" for they had a joyful religion, and the lyrics of Charles Wesley were ever on their lips. They talked their religion; and whether they wrought at their trade, or mingled in society, or were at the bed-side of the sick,

or on a journey, they were ready to "Stand up for Jesus," and witness to the power of Christ to save them from sin. They have been "known and read of all men," for their earnest declarative manner of showing their religion.

The influence of this demonstrative spirit, as it has affected the success of Methodism, has been too little appreciated. The sentiment that only rude and uncultivated minds are proper subjects for an emotional religion, and are the only ones who give signal expression to their enjoyment of it, is inconsistent with sound philosophy, or the warrant of Scripture examples. Such minds may indeed exhibit their feelings in a more physical or sensuous manner than is employed by the refined and cultivated; but the reality of a heart experience, and the certainty of showing it in some appropriate demonstrative way consistent with the culture of its subject, applies as well to the philosopher as the rustic, to the learned as to the unlearned, to Paul as well as to Peter, to John Wesley no less than to Benjamin Abbott.

That Methodism has been affected by the reputation and the influence of this demonstrative spirit, does not admit of a doubt. This spirit has been peculiarly Methodistic. Nearly all other sects endeavored to suppress any indications of emotion in their religion. They lacked a free and responsive worship. Their preaching was on themes and in a manner that awakened but little feeling in the hearts of their hearers. Their social service was staid, and limited in its exercises to the active participation of a few officials. They had no seasons like the class-meeting for mutual conversation respecting the spiritual life of their mem-

bers. Their songs were destitute of the life and soul that inspires the heart with grateful responsive utterances. In a word, they feared and denounced all demonstrative exhibitions of a heart-felt religion. Such exhibitions, as they were distinctly Methodistic, contributed greatly to the growth and influence of Methodism. They attracted the attention of the people, and led them to inquire what such demonstrations meant. They commended the experience they manifested to the conscience and judgment of men, as both consistent in a religion professedly of God, and agreeing with the phenomena of such manifestations in the Scriptures. They made Methodism a prevalent agency that continually arrested the minds of men, and directed their attention to religious things, through the labors of its members, who were, like so many evangelists, going everywhere preaching the word. As this demonstrative spirit was excited by the Spirit of God, it was often attended by a power that affected the hearts of men to seek Christ, and to become participants of the same grace; and multitudes have been saved instrumentally by the demonstrative spirit of Methodism.

We ought not to omit, in the enumeration of the causes for the success of Methodism, its *Heroic Spirit*. It is hardly necessary, however, to dwell on this, after what has been said, in previous chapters, of the opposition and difficulties with which it had to contend. Nothing less than a heroism inspired by the grace of God to face all dangers, to endure all self denials, to bear all reproaches, and to perform any amount of toil and labor, could have succeeded in conquering every opposing influence, and establishing Methodism as the largest and most influential denomination of this country.

Methodism has been successful because it has been controlled by an *eclectic spirit that has directed it in the adoption of means well adapted to accomplish its great design*, — to spread Scripture holiness over the land. In speaking of the causes of this success, it is most common to refer directly to the particular means employed, and to praise the itinerancy, the extempore preaching, the class-meeting, and the financial policy of Methodism. This is natural, because the agencies and the results have each an intimate relation. But Methodism has not been successful from the use of any one particular means: it has been from the use of a great number and a great variety of agencies, peculiarly adapted and harmoniously working to accomplish a given end; and all these agencies have been introduced by what we call an eclectic spirit, that inquired what were the best means, and courageously and promptly adopted them.

John Wesley and his followers have had but one object, — to make men holy. To this they have been undeviatingly devoted, as the needle is steady to the pole. To accomplish this object they have said, "Let us employ every available consistent means." He expressed his great idea when he said, "Church or no church, we must save souls." At the beginning of his work, he was met with the prevalent opinion of all the churches, that salvation must come to men only by the use of means that were supposed to be effectual because they were sanctioned by authority and antiquity. Every sect defended its particular usages by the plea that they were authorized by the fathers. This was especially the case in the Established Church, to which he belonged. The first step for Methodism to

take, was to break loose from the dictation of precedents, and follow the path of expediency: to adopt the means that sound wisdom, directed by Providence, should suggest as best adapted to secure the great end of saving men. Before his conversion, Wesley was strongly prejudiced (almost bigoted) in favor of the exclusive use and efficiency of what the church enjoined. It was necessary that he should be saved from the dominion, if not from the preferences, of his prejudices. It required no little amount of courage to set aside the authority of canons, and the dictation of ecclesiastics, and introduce measures that would be sure to be condemned and opposed because of their novelty. Yet this was the first thing required of him, — to institute measures that were the result of an eclectic spirit, and chosen because they were better than any others, to preach the gospel to the poor. He resolved to adopt them; and it was the beginning of an eclecticism that characterized all his future movements, and has marked the movements of all his followers. He entered this path with great reluctance; he submitted to follow it rather than chose it. He saw "men as trees walking." It was a severe struggle with him to follow the novel proposal of Whitefield, and preach in the open air to the colliers of Kingswood. He then began to see things more clearly, and he was better prepared for the next measure, — to organize classes. Every successive step confirmed him in his eclectic spirit, until he came at last to the full belief, — the fundamental belief of Methodists, — that the Bible, having provided for a divinely-called ministry, has left a wide latitude, depending on circumstances, respecting the means to be employed to perfect and establish the

church of Christ on earth; that that church will be most successful that shows the best practical sense in the agencies it uses to induce men to seek the knowledge of Christ, and that will best assist them in living godly.

It is hardly necessary for us to refer to each particular, to show that the whole economy of Methodism is the result of this eclectic spirit. We have seen how Wesley was led to engage in field-preaching, and made it the practice of all his itinerants; how he began his class-organization in Bristol, and this class became the precedent for fifty thousand classes in Methodism throughout the world; how he began his chapel-building as the necessity of his societies required, and his example has been imitated in the erection of a chapel wherever Methodism is known; how he introduced lay preaching, against his prejudices, because he said, "It is the Lord," and so established an order of ministry that have given the best proof of their apostleship of any race of ministry to be found; how he created an itinerancy, suggested by the necessities of his societies, and the work of God, that has proved a method of spreading the gospel, without a parallel in its efficiency in any other system of ministerial labor; how he introduced his conferences for mutual consultation with his helpers, and thus organized the ecclesiastical legislature and judiciary of Methodism; how he introduced the voluntary system of class collections as an expedient to relieve the wants of his itinerants, and in this way initiated a policy for the support of the ministry that has been successfully adopted throughout the church; how, in a word, the whole organic structure of Wesleyanism came into form, both in design and construction, by the dictation of eclecticism.

Every feature of organized American Methodism grew out of a policy that asked first, What is expedient for the prosperity and usefulness of the church? — a policy that was ready to relinquish whatever had proved disadvantageous, to modify whatever was found susceptible of improvement, and to adopt whatever measures promised to advance the interests of an experimental and vital religion. It would surprise any one who examines the history of Methodism in this country, — with reference to the influence of any controlling power in its establishment, — to find that it has been so entirely free from the dictation of precedents, and that it has been constructed wholly by the direction of Christian expediency. He would find a well-adjusted, harmonious, and energetic ecclesiastical system, every part of which has been introduced and arranged by a judicious spirit of eclecticism to meet the religious wants and mind of the American people; and he would find, that, because of this, Methodism has been so successful in this country.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FUTURE OF METHODISM.

"If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

THE reader must not suppose, from the title of this chapter, that we intend to write prophecies, or tell what Methodism will be in the future. Instead of this, we propose to inquire, What is the work Methodism has before it? What are its resources and capabilities? What are its auxiliaries to aid it in doing this work? And what must the Methodism in the future be to make it successful in meeting its great responsibilities?

What has Methodism to do in the future? This is a grave and comprehensive question, that may not be easily answered. Its obligations and duties are to be determined, not only by the talents it possesses, but by the opportunity and the demand for using them. If it is distinguished in the future as it has been in the past, it will be remarkable for meeting the developing religious wants of the country. These are to be very great. There has never been a time in the history of this nation more imperatively requiring the saving influence of an active and powerful evangelical movement, like that of Methodism, than the present.

We have before referred to the opportune advent of

Methodism to meet the religious wants of this rapidly-growing country, and how well it met these wants. But the expansion and growth of this nation, though without a parallel in the history of nations, seem to have reached only their youthful period. Who could have dreamed, that, in a century, the population of this country would have increased tenfold, and, from less than three millions, it would now number more than thirty millions. This ratio of increase is as large to-day as at any period of the past. In fact, the encouragements offered to emigration are so great, that it is difficult to see how it can be diminished. There is still a large domain of country in a comparatively virgin state; there is a rich soil ready to produce its thirty, sixty, and hundred fold, with opening mines of the common and precious metals, with their immense treasures; all inviting the crowded millions of the Old World. There are avenues to be entered and improved by every form of mechanical and manufacturing industry, and enterprise and genius will certainly continue to press into and occupy them. When to these are added the social and political advantages that are offered to every new-comer, in contrast to those he has had in his native country, the facilities for the education of his children, and the promise of influence, wealth, and honor, to which he has been a stranger, no human power can stay the tide, and millions of immigrants will annually come from every nation to make this their home.

The vast increase of the population of the United States is not problematical, if the moral and political integrity of the nation is preserved. The estimates of some statisticians, who compute that the population of this country at the close of this century will be

over one hundred millions, are probably too large; yet there can hardly be a doubt that it will reach this number in half a century from the present time, and that this vast multitude will be spread out from the tropics to the nearest inhabitable regions towards the poles, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The most interesting phase of this immense population, at least that which ought to create the greatest anxiety in regard to them, is their religious characteristics. These are to affect their salvation, and are to direct the political destinies of the country. The emigrants make a large part of the people, and are from every nation of the "babbling earth:" of these, four millions at least are under the training and ecclesiastical dominion of Romanism, with its ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. Another large class are professedly free-thinkers and infidels, from Germany and other Continental States. There are many Jews scattered throughout the principal cities and towns. The tide is already setting in on the Pacific coast; and probably before many years there will be found there large numbers from China, Japan, and even from the Polynesian Islands, followers of Confucius and other heathens. In a word, almost the entire Foreign-American element of the nation is anti-Christian, or at least anti-Protestant.

Turning from the emigrant to the Native-American population, as it is and as it promises to be in respect to their religious state, the Christian philanthropist and statesman has additional cause for solicitude. These number not less than twenty-five millions, with a certainty that by the close of this century they will have increased two or three fold. These, as a whole, are not so demoralized in life, nor so difficult to be brought

under the influence of a pure Christianity, as the foreign element; but their characteristics are such as to create anxiety respecting the means that should be used to make them Christians, and prepare them to contribute to the permanent prosperity of the country. The most of this major part of the inhabitants of the United States are nominally Protestants, but not more than one-fifth of them are professed Christians. Half of the remaining four-fifths are young persons in the formative period of life, whose maturity will depend on the religious training they receive, whether it shall be godly or wicked. Probably not less than five millions of these native-born citizens, with nominal affinities for Protestantism, rarely or never attend public worship, and are only remotely affected by religious instruction, a large part of them living in practical wickedness, and with "no fear of God before their eyes." These various classes are to increase or diminish in number, and according to their character will be saved or lost, will give strength or weakness to the state, and will become a correspondingly controlling power for good or evil, as the rapidly-swelling tide of population is increased, and as the evangelical power of Christianity shall be found adequate or insufficient to save them.

Never since the first landing of emigrants on American shores has there been a period in American history more momentous in its grand issues than the present; never a question for Protestantism more grave and important than it is now called upon to decide, — whether it has a vital force sufficient to meet the emergency that is upon it; whether it can increase its saving and conserving power, correspondingly at least, with the increasing population, and with the peculiar wants and charac-

teristics of the growing nation. The problem is to be solved, whether a free government can be prosperous and permanent, whatever may be the greatness of its territory, or the rapidity of its growth. Protestantism is also put on trial, and is to show its capacity, its vigor, and its expansiveness, and how far it can evangelize men who have every variety of religion or irreligion, — in a word, to prove whether it has inherent power to prepare men to be the best citizens and the best Christians.

Methodism has to take a conspicuous part in deciding this interesting question. As the largest Protestant sect of the country, and the only one that has increased in numbers with a greater ratio than the increase of population, and the only one, too, that has diffused itself correspondingly with the expanding settlements of the nation, it ought to take the lead, and to direct the future efforts of the denominations of the land, in moulding and conserving the religious character of the American people. It has an honorable record in the past: its future should be no less honorable. At the close of its centenary year, it ought to gird itself anew with divine strength; and, in close alliance with the other evangelical churches of the country, it ought to engage with increased zeal to bring the constraining power of the gospel to every heart; it ought to prepare to meet all the subjects of every nationality who adopt our country as their home, and educate them in the truths of a pure religion, convert them, and, by the power of the cross, make them a people homogeneous in spirit, and godly in their lives. It ought to be the great religious educator of the young; and by its incessant and powerful revivals, sweeping the country from its centre to its extremes, and conquering all opposing influences, it

ought to gather to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus the thousands and millions who now are, or shall be, found ignorant of an experimental and vital religion. If it fails to do this, it will disappoint the expectations justly raised from its past history, and the glory of the achievement will be given to others.

What are the capabilities and resources of Methodism to do the work that we have assigned it? If any one of the five persons present when Philip Embury preached his first sermon in the little room in Barrack Street, New York, had said, under the spirit of prophecy, "This is the germ that is to grow, and spread out its branches, and in an hundred years cover a nation that shall occupy a continent," he would have been to those who heard him as "one that dreamed." If, less than twenty years later, another had predicted that a company of sixty itinerants, who were assembled in Lovely-Lane Chapel, Baltimore, and organized an ecclesiastical system under the seemingly pretentious name of "The Methodist-Episcopal Church of the United States," were laying successfully the foundations of a great structure, in which would be gathered in this year of grace, 1867, more than a million members, and that these sixty ministers were to be represented by three hundred times their number, his predictions, though not quite so improbable as the former one, would contain so much of the marvellous that none would have credited them. But he that to-day declares that Methodism is to be the future controlling religious power of this nation, and that it will be multiplied in its numbers, and increased in its influence, so that upon it will devolve a large responsibility in determining what shall be the religious charac-

ter of the American people, would only be stating prospective facts, the truth of which might be presumed by every principle of reasoning from a known cause to a legitimate result. The resources and present position of Methodism warrant such a declaration. We say this on the assumption that the future of Methodism shall correspond with its success in the past.

Let us take some elevated stand-point from which to see the present resources of Methodism, especially as they are adapted to affect the future religious state of this country.

First we notice its *numerical strength.* Numbers alone are not sufficient to assure us of their power in a given work; but, when they represent intelligence and moral excellence, they are important data to determine the efficiency of their representatives. With this view, the Methodist people are to be regarded as not inferior to any other class. They represent industry, sobriety, intelligence, the love of order, and purity of life; they are among those who have the most influence in making the laws, preserving the morality, and advancing the prosperity of the nation. With such a character, two millions of Methodists, increasing with a larger ratio every succeeding year, and educated and led by thirty thousand itinerant and local preachers, must have a controlling agency in deciding the future of this great republic. With such a great army, united and rightly directed, with all the moral appliances that it has at its command, how strong must be its efforts to overcome all attempts to subvert the institutions of Christianity! how vigorous its movements to promote the interests of pure religion!

The efficiency of this large number of Methodists

must be reckoned from the fact that they are widely distributed throughout the whole nation. All other religious denominations are comparatively provincial: they have pre-eminence or strength only in some particular sections of the country. Methodism is universal: it reaches, in its general distribution, from the great lakes of the North to the tropical gulf, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is metropolitan and rural. It has its ecclesiastical organizations in every manufacturing town, and in every settlement of the new Territories. A Methodist cannot remove from one part of the country, however remote, to any other part, but he finds there those of the same faith, actuated by the same spirit, and engaging in the same kind of worship. His certificate of membership, like the note of a national bank, is everywhere received without doubt, and for its full face.

Another feature of Methodism which imparts to this wide diffusion greater power in doing good, or in resisting evil, is the harmony and unity of its efficient government. Any part of it is available as an auxiliary and help to any other part, where necessity may require it. The talents, wealth, and sympathies of the whole church may be employed wherever they are most needed. The system of Methodism is so far centralized in its executive control, that it can be readily employed for the work of dissemination. If required, as it is in its home-mission scheme, it can give aid and strength to a thousand feeble churches scattered over the country; or it can establish a new Conference, with its missionary itinerants, in New Mexico or Utah. It can direct its energies to supply the emergent demands of the freedmen of the South, or it can devote its labors successfully and specif-

ically to the German or Scandinavian portion of the population. Like the various divisions of an army, similarly disciplined and equipped, all Methodism is prepared to engage in its evangelical work in any section of the nation wherever its service is most needed. Its systematic, comprehensive, and well-ordered economy is one of its resources for directing the future religious destiny of the people.

Methodism is strong in its many auxiliary or collateral institutions: it had none of these at the beginning of the present century. Perhaps the most influential of these is its extensive system of education. It is often said, and truly, that those "who educate the young are the real governors of a nation." Methodism has been awake to this fact, and is now in advance of all other religious denominations in its educational institutions. It is multiplying these at a rapid rate. Its seminaries are distributed through all its Conferences. Its colleges have increased so fast that many of its friends have feared that they would be too numerous to secure sufficient support. It has, for direct religious instruction, at least one Sunday-school for every church. Its systematic plan for the education of its ministry applies to every candidate for sacred orders. In fact, Methodism is prepared to educate every one that may be reached by its extensive institutions in all parts of the country. It is also indirectly teaching the American mind by the diffusion of a healthy literature, by gathering the masses to hear the Word at its annual camp-meetings, and by the multiplication of its churches in every part of the land.

The power of Methodism is great from its wealth. Once the Methodists were poor; but few of them were possessed of riches. There are many such still among

them. And it should never cease to be the glory of Methodism, that it is faithful in preaching the gospel to the poor. But its religion has taught industry and economy, and has given wealth to many who were indigent. It will continue to do this. There is now no class, religious or irreligious, with more aggregate wealth than Methodists; and this gives them, as it is consecrated to Christ, and employed with a liberal hand, immense means for the spread of true religion. Methodists have shown that they understood the divine will in giving them riches, and the enlargement of their liberality has hitherto been proportionate to the increase of their wealth. With the means they now possess, and the prospect of its accumulation, Methodism has, and will have, all the financial strength it requires to sustain its agencies to improve the religious character of the nation.

There is, however, no cause for solicitude respecting the future of Methodism from any want of resources. If when its numbers were few, and it was feeble in influence and wealth, — when it was persecuted and opposed, — it grew and became strong, and made the impress of its spirit and its labors on the mind and institutions of the nation; if then it gave tone and quality to the religion of these States, and increased in numbers faster than the population, how much more may it do now that "the small one has become a strong nation," with wealth and universal diffusion, with organized co-operating institutions, and with the favor and confidence of the people? Yet, with all these resources, Methodism may disappoint the expectations created by its history, and may fail to fulfil what is its apparent destiny. There are, besides its external agencies, condi-

tions that are essential to its future success, — conditions that must be met, that it may prove sufficient for the demands that will be made upon it.

How is Methodism to meet its responsibilities for the future? The resources of the church are such as to make these responsibilities great; but the means of doing does not make it certain that the work will be done. Great numbers and past success have their temptations as well as their inspirations. Wealth, learning, social influence, and reputation have their perils as well as their power; and Methodism must see to it that it fail not by the seductive influences that sometimes attach to means, and especially that it cultivate those qualities that will make its apparent resources real agencies of power. Some things are fundamental for its future success, and they are chiefly those that have given it success in the past. These are, first, —

THE DIVINE PRESENCE AND HELP.

Its growth and efficiency in the past has come from this. Referring to what has been done for it or by it, Methodism may say, "What hath God wrought!" The divine interposition and assistance have been manifested in every phase of its history. Upon this it must rely for success in the future. Yet the history of every religious sect of the past is full of warning against the danger of self-reliance, of the liability to fail to trust in God when visible means of human power increase. And Methodism will not be an exception in history if it forget the arm that hath hitherto been its strength. The work it has to do will be altogether too great and difficult for it, except the power of God attend and direct

its workmen. Whatever it may hope to be or to do, it may well say, "If thy presence go not with us, take us not up hence." Next, —

METHODISM MUST CONTINUE TO CULTIVATE A VITAL RELIGION IN ALL ITS MEMBERS.

With this vital or experimental religion it originated: this has characterized its progress, and from this it has derived its peculiar success. The first question proposed to every one who desired to become a Methodist was, "Do you know Christ as your Saviour?" In this experience he found the source of his hope and confidence. This vital religion has been the strength and unity of the entire system of Methodism. This it must teach and know if it continues to lead in the work of evangelization. Nothing can be substituted for it. Reliance on an orthodox faith, or in the sincerity of a profession of the Christian name, or in liberality or zeal in God's service, without the love of God shed abroad in the heart, will prove but "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." How weak and hollow would Methodism be without vital godliness! Its class-meetings would become a lifeless and reluctant service; its prayer-meetings and love-feasts no better than dead forms, without a soul for its members, and without saving influence on others; its preaching would be cold and unaffecting disquisitions, and every effort nominally made by the church to save men would be wanting in zeal and in power. But if the church retains its historic position, and preserves a sound religious experience, and all its members are qualified to commend the excellence of Christianity from a conscious knowledge of its saving excellence, there will

be found nothing that can successfully resist the movements of Methodism to spread scriptural holiness in the world. It could well afford to surrender all its apparent means, and give up wealth and great numbers and intellectual culture, if the sacrifice of these were the cost of retaining the vigor of its religious experience. Indeed, so long as the church retains this vital power, experimentally as well as theoretically, it will be quite sure to retain all else that is good in its system and resources, and to possess an inherent energy that will make it irresistible in saving souls.

Another condition which will determine whether Methodism will meet its future responsibilities is that

IT PRESERVES ITS EVANGELICAL SPIRIT.

We have said before that this spirit has been a cause for its past success. But the retention of this spirit is not certain because Methodism has become a great ecclesiastical establishment, nor because it makes formal efforts to bring proselytes to its communion. The Pharisees of old "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte," but did not thereby save him. Nominal churches in every age have been industrious to lead men into their folds, without the evangelical spirit that sought to make them holy. The great idea of Methodism has been to seek and save the lost; to go to them unsought, and induce them to embrace Christ as their Saviour. It was not to disciple them to a creed, or to make them Methodists in name, but to persuade them to become personal participants of the divine love. In this work they did not fail. It will be by following this line of evangelical effort; by entering every open door, and

saying to all, "Come, taste, and see that the Lord is good;" by telling men that they are sinners, lost without the atonement; that Christ died for them all; that repentance for sin is required of every one; that by faith they may be justified, and know their acceptance by the Spirit's testimony; and that their experience may be crowned by a perfect love that casteth out fear; that Methodism is to be hereafter, as it has been heretofore, the great evangelizing agency of the land.

Another element of power in future Methodism must be found in

ITS BROTHERLY SPIRIT.

To this we have also before referred as a distinguishing peculiarity of the sect, and a cause for its success. There is probably no more seductive or fatal temptation that can assail a church, strong in its numbers and wealth, than that which would lead it to attempt to do an evangelical work, as a patron, or by proxy, than in seeking to save men in classes, than in offering to the poor a caste religion apart from the rich. Nothing is at this day so greatly imperilling the influence of Protestantism in this country, especially in towns and cities, as the introduction of a feeling of caste in the worship of God. In olden times, Methodism said, "God hath made of one blood all nations," and Christ died for all, and grace is free for all, and heaven is open to all, and the church invites all, rich and poor, without distinction, to meet together. This brotherly spirit reached down its hand, and lifted up every one below to a common plane of religious privilege. It had no uppermost or exclusive seats in its synagogues for the rich or for the poor: in the quaint language of an old Christian, it said, "Come

early, sit where you please; come late, sit where you can." "If sin or poverty has given you a lower place, come up and sit with us in heavenly places." By the cultivation of this spirit, Methodism is to be the Saviour of the masses. But if it yields to the temptation, and follows in the practice now becoming so common, and, by its costly churches and expensive pews, virtually excludes the poor from the house of God by making it impracticable or unpleasant for them to come there, and endeavors to save the ungodly by any system of cold patronage, and not by a brotherly, fraternal spirit, the apparently evangelical work of Methodism will prove a failure. But if, on the other hand, following the example of its founder and of the fathers, Methodists open their hearts and churches, and identify themselves in sympathy and affection with the condition of the mean as well as of the great, and say, "Come all, and let us worship God together," there is no power that can resist the attraction of this invitation, or hinder them from being instruments in the salvation of the people.

Methodism will succeed in the future as it is faithful

IN CONSERVING THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF ITS MEMBERS.

John Wesley gathered his converts into classes and societies that they might be assisted in their attempts to live godly, and that they might be recovered from any departure from the path of holiness. This policy of helping and protecting its members has been a marked feature of Methodism, and has contributed to preserve its integrity and insure its prosperity. It must be retained with scrupulous care in the future. Nothing should be allowed to prevent a faithful supervision of

the religious life of every member of the church. Yet there is danger that this supervision may be neglected. It will be an unfortunate day for Methodism, and its future usefulness, when a faithful conservation of its members shall cease, and, instead, the church shall be noted for a lax discipline, and for only casual pastoral care. But if the church shall maintain a vigilant supervision of all that are brought within its influence, and its children shall be watched over with parental care; if every member shall be practically helped in his growth in Christian experience by the aid and counsel of godly leaders; if those who minister at its altars shall, like the Great Shepherd, know all the sheep of the flock, and give to each his portion in due season; if, while Methodism is acting the part of a faithful missionary to the nation in gathering multitudes to Christ, it shall also sedulously watch over the spiritual life of those it has gathered, and train them to be holy, active, and useful members of the church,—it will correspondingly increase its vital strength, and Methodism will be like an army, disciplined and equipped, without supernumeraries or stragglers, and prepared to overcome every thing that opposes it in its great work of saving men.

Methodism will meet its future responsibilities as it encourages

PERSONAL LABOR IN ALL ITS MEMBERS.

No existing church organization is better constructed to favor this than the Methodist Church. None has said more earnestly to all its adherents, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." The growth of Methodism is much to be attributed to its efficient system of lay efforts. From the instant that a person united with the church, he

was taught that he had something to do, if he would prosper religiously; that every one had at least one talent, and that it should not be hid in a napkin. A shrewd observer of men has said, "The Methodist Church has prospered because it trained all its members to work." He comprehended the philosophy of the case,— that whoever labored for an object increased his love for it, and that he that works for Christ will be a better Christian than the idler. Methodism furnishes to all its disciples some opportunity to labor through its various agencies, and finds a field for each, adapted to his respective gifts.

If the missionary spirit shall affect it; if there shall be a corresponding readiness to make sacrifices for the spread of the gospel; if liberality shall be shown proportioned to its wealth, and every Methodist shall feel, "I am in the church to do something for Christ,"— its ever increasing numbers, and the diversity of their endowments, will give Methodism success in the future commensurate with its great responsibilities.

Finally, if Methodism shall prove to be what we have said it ought,— the leading religious agency in determining the character of the American people; if its future shall fulfil our predictions concerning it,— it must obey the lessons taught by its past history, and be a progressive church. It must follow the *counsels of practical expediency.* True, it must adhere tenaciously to its great evangelical doctrines. It must insist that all its members shall be the subjects of vital piety, with corresponding lives. It must honor and perpetuate and give increasing vigor to the means that have been wisely employed to give it success; but it must remember that

its economy has been introduced by a wise eclecticism, that listened to the voice of Providence, and adapted itself to the various necessities that arose. So it must continue to do. Holding fast to what the Word of God has made essential to a true church, it must be ready to employ every means that prudence and invention may suggest to give it access to the hearts, and to enable it to control, and savingly direct, the lives of the people. Some changes will doubtless be introduced into the economy of Methodism, as the peculiar circumstances of the future will require. Such changes in the past have not been so much sought for as they have suggested themselves, and an enlightened policy and the spirit of Methodism will be ready to adopt any changes that may be required, when the advantages of change shall be made plain. But the future success of Methodism will be best secured as it unites a healthy conservatism with an active progressiveness, as it inquires after the old paths for safety, and wisely employs every measure that Providence shall dictate to increase its efficiency and power in saving souls.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHRONOLOGICAL AND STATISTICAL.

WE propose, in this concluding chapter, to give the reader a chronological and statistical review of American Methodism.

The first Methodist sermon preached on the American continent was by Philip Embury, an emigrant and local preacher from Ireland. He came to this country in 1760. The sermon was delivered at his residence in Barrack Street, now City Hall-Place, in New York, in 1766, to four persons.

At the same time, Embury organized the first Methodist class in this country, and was its first leader.

About the same time, Robert Strawbridge, another local preacher from Ireland, began preaching in Frederick County, Maryland.

The first public building used for Methodist worship was a sail-loft, hired for the purpose, in Horse and Cart Street (now William Street), New York. This was soon after Embury began preaching in the city.

About this time, Strawbridge built a log meeting-house on Pipe Creek, Frederick County, Maryland, and preached regularly to the settlers of those regions.

The first Methodist church was built in John Street, New York, and dedicated by Embury, Oct. 30, 1768.

The first missionaries sent directly by Wesley to America were William Boardman and Joseph Pillmore: they arrived in Philadelphia in October, 1769. In October, 1771, he sent two others, Francis Asbury and Richard Wright; and in 1773 he sent two more, Thomas Rankin and Joseph Shadford.

Methodism was introduced into Philadelphia by Captain Webb, a local preacher, in 1768. The first church-edifice built in Baltimore was in 1773.

The first Annual Conference was held in Philadelphia, July 14, 1773. All the members of this Conference were foreigners except William Watters, who joined this year, and was the first native Methodist preacher on the continent.

The Methodist-Episcopal Church in the United States was organized in Baltimore, by the advice of Mr. Wesley, Dec. 25, 1784, at a Special Conference of all the itinerants, called for the purpose. Dr. Thomas Coke, who had been ordained superintendent by Mr. Wesley, presided. Francis Asbury, who had been appointed an associate-superintendent by Mr. Wesley, was elected to the office by the members of this conference, and was successively ordained deacon, elder, and bishop. Articles of religion, a litany or church-service, a collection of psalms and hymns, and rules and regulations for the government of the new church, were adopted at this Conference. The Conference lasted ten days. There were, at this time, eighty-three preachers, and about fifteen thousand members in the church.

Methodism was introduced into Charleston, South Carolina, by Asbury and Lee, in 1785.

It was introduced west of the Alleghany Mountains, the same year, by John Cooper and Samuel Breese.

Freeborn Garrettson and nine young itinerants introduced Methodism into eastern and northern New York in 1788.

Jesse Lee introduced Methodism into New England, and formed the first Society in Stratford, Connecticut, Sept. 26, 1789. The term of probation was changed this year from three to six months.

The office of presiding elder was introduced into the minutes in 1790. It had existed in fact, though not so named, since the organization of the church.

The first General Conference of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was held in Baltimore Nov. 1, 1792. Until this time, all the legislation of the church had been in Annual or District Conferences, and every important measure required the concurrence of all these Annual Conferences to make it binding on the church.

Important laws were made by this Conference. It adopted rules for the election, responsibility, and duties of bishops. It authorized the appointment of presiding elders by the bishops. It regulated how members removing from one circuit to another should be received by certificate. This Conference established a regular Quadrennial General Conference, composed of all ministers in full membership. Provision was also made for the trial of a preacher for immorality, improper conduct, or heresy.

The next General Conference met in Baltimore, Oct. 20, 1796. Rules were adopted at this Conference creating a "Chartered Fund," for the relief of superannuated or worn-out preachers, and for the children and widows of deceased preachers; also defining the boundaries of Annual Conferences, and providing for local preachers to be licensed on the recommendation

of a Quarterly Conference, and for their ordination; and for a uniform deed of church-property.

The next General Conference met in Baltimore, May 6, 1800. Richard Whatcoat was elected and ordained bishop. The Conference made it necessary that a preacher should have travelled four years, and be in full connection, to be a member of the General Conference. It also raised the preacher's allowance from sixty-four dollars to eighty dollars annually; and the same amount was allowed to his wife: it made provision also for his children.

The General Conference met in Baltimore, May 7, 1804. It prohibited the bishop from allowing a preacher to remain in one charge more than two years. This continued in force, with exceptions in given cases, until 1865. Provision was made for the trial of a bishop in the interim of a General Conference. It removed the Book Concern, that was established at Philadelphia in 1789, to New York.

The next General Conference met in Baltimore, May 6, 1808. Bishop Whatcoat had died July 5, 1806, and the Conference elected and ordained William McKendree bishop. The principal work of this Conference was an organic change made in the constitution and powers of the General Conference. It adopted what were called "Restrictive Rules," forbidding the General Conference to make certain changes in the "Discipline;" and providing that henceforth the Conference should meet on the 1st of May every fourth year, and be composed of delegates elected by each Annual Conference, *pro rata*, according to the number of its members.

The General Conference met in New York in 1812. It provided that stewards should be nominated by the

preacher, and elected by the Quarterly Conference; it also directed how local deacons should be ordained elders, and that each Annual Conference should provide for the temporal relief of its superannuated preachers.

The General Conference met in Baltimore, May 1, 1816. Bishop Asbury had died the 31st of March preceding. Dr. Coke, the first bishop of the church, had died the 3d of May, 1814. The Conference elected and ordained Enoch George and Robert R. Roberts bishops. Some of the New-England churches had rented their pews, and this Conference condemned the practice. It also created the office of district-stewards, to provide for the temporal wants of the presiding elders. The allowance for preachers and their wives was raised to one hundred dollars each. This was the first Conference where a course of study was appointed for candidates for the ministry: this provision was only for those who were to be received in full membership. It has been extended, both in its range of subjects and in its application, and now applies to local preachers, candidates for orders, and to those of each successive stage, from those to be admitted on trial to those who are to be ordained elders.

In 1818, the Book Concern issued "The Methodist Magazine," the first periodical issued by the church. It has been continued, though it has twice changed its name, to the present time.

The General Conference met in Baltimore, May 1, 1820. It made no changes in the rules of the church, but adopted regulations of great importance in reference to some auxiliary institutions. In 1817, some members of the church had organized a Tract Society. This Conference sanctioned the organization, and adopted

it for the whole church. In 1819, a Missionary Society was organized by the Methodist churches in New-York City. This Conference also adopted this society, and issued an appeal in its behalf. The Conference, for the first time, recommended the Annual Conferences to establish seminaries under their patronage and control. Soon after the organization of the church, Cokesbury College was built near Baltimore. In 1795, it burned down; and, from that time until this Conference, no official action had been taken to favor educational institutions under the patronage of the church. Henceforth the subject of education received the encouragement of every General Conference, and seminaries and colleges have been increased with great rapidity.

This Conference also established a Branch Book Concern at Cincinnati, Ohio. A revised edition of the Hymn-book was ordered published, and in 1836 a supplement was added to this. In 1848 a new edition, as used at present, was printed by the authority of the General Conference of that year. The Conference of 1820 authorized the publication of a tune-book, adapted to the new Hymn-book. Several new ones have been published since that time. The Methodist-Episcopal Church sent its first delegate, Rev. John Emory, this year to the Wesleyan Connection.

The General Conference for 1824 was held in Baltimore: Joshua Soule and Elijah Hedding were elected and ordained bishops. Richard Reece and John Hannah were present as the first delegates sent to the Methodist-Episcopal Church from the Wesleyan Connection. Since then, with but few exceptions, delegates have been appointed from each of these churches as representatives to the other once in every four years.

The first weekly periodical published officially by the church — "The Christian Advocate" — was issued from the Book Room in New York, Sept. 9, 1826. Two others had been published, one in Charleston, S.C., and one in Boston, Mass., by associations, and patronized by the church. The one in Boston had quite an extensive circulation, and by mutual arrangement was united with "The Advocate." It was, however, re-established about two years later, and has continued to the present time, the principal religious weekly of the church in New England. There are now nine official and six unofficial weekly papers supported by the church in different parts of the country.

In 1827, the Sunday-school Union of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was organized. Owing to an unwise union of this society with the Bible and Tract Societies, and to committing the entire management of the society to the Book Concern, it did not accomplish the good that its friends had hoped it would. In 1840, it was reorganized by the General Conference, as a distinctive Sunday-school Society. Since then it has prospered; and its receipts, though not large, have been employed chiefly in founding new schools or in aiding feeble ones.

The General Conference met at Pittsburg, May 1, 1828. There were no rules passed at this Conference particularly changing the economy of the church. For several years the ministers and members of the church in Canada, owing to the separate political jurisdiction of those provinces, had desired to become a church, independent of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. At this Conference, arrangements were mutually made to perfect the separation, and the Methodists of Canada were organized as an independent church. They were sub-

sequently divided into the Methodist-Episcopal Church in Canada, and the Wesleyan Connection.

The General Conference met in Philadelphia, May 1, 1832. James O. Andrews and John Emory were elected and ordained bishops. Bishop George had died Aug. 23, 1828. The action of this Conference had respect chiefly to the missionary and educational work that was awaking considerable interest in the church. This Conference made further provisions for each Annual Conference to inquire into the necessities of the superannuated preachers in its bounds, and to take measures to raise the amount required for their support. The bishops were instructed not to leave an effective man without an appointment.

The General Conference met in Cincinnati, Ohio, May 1, 1836. The senior bishop, McKendree, had died in Tennessee, March 5, 1835. Bishop Emory had also died Dec. 16, 1835. This Conference elected and ordained Beverly Waugh and Thomas A. Morris bishops. They also elected Wilbur Fisk, but he declined the office. This Conference required a preacher to give a member, not attending class, an opportunity to be heard in his own defence, before a committee. Hitherto the preacher had power to exclude him for this delinquency. It also authorized an Annual Conference to locate any of its members who were "unacceptable as travelling preachers."

In 1839, the centenary of Methodism was celebrated by appropriate religious services and by large thank-offerings, by Methodists generally. The General Conference was held in Baltimore, May 1, 1840. The disciplinary changes made were, that the president of an Annual or Quarterly Conference should decide questions of law before these bodies, subject to an appeal from

the former to the next General Conference, and from the latter to the next Annual Conference. A rule was adopted, admitting ministers and members from other denominations, without probation, on certain conditions. This year, for the first time, candidates were required to give their assent to the doctrines of the church before admission into full membership.

The General Conference was held in New York, May 1, 1844. Bishop Roberts had died March 28, 1843. Leonidas L. Hamline and Edmund S. Janes were elected and ordained bishops. Almost the entire session was occupied with deliberations respecting slavery, especially in regard to the admissibility of a bishop to retain his office, if a slave-holder. The result of these deliberations was, that provision was made for the organization of a new church South, if it should be found necessary.

The General Conference of 1848 was held at Pittsburg. It decided, that, when a member of an Annual Conference located, he was entitled to a certificate of the fact, and was amenable to the Quarterly Conference where he should reside. Also that a member of the church, removing from one place to another, was entitled to a certificate of his membership.

The General Conference for 1852 was held in Boston. Bishop Hedding had died the 9th of April, 1852. The resignation of Bishop Hamline, tendered to this Conference on account of his ill health, was accepted. Levi Scott, Matthew Simpson, Osmon C. Baker, and Edward R. Ames were elected bishops. This Conference revived the Tract Society of the church. It ordered the publication of "The National Magazine," a monthly periodical, at New York. It was published for eight years, and then discontinued.

The General Conference for 1856 was held at Indianapolis, Ind. The ratio of delegates was changed from one in thirty to one in forty-five members of an Annual Conference. The Conference authorized the election and ordination of a bishop for the Liberia Mission Conference. It also adopted more specific rules for the baptism and training of young children.

Since the last General Conference, the civil courts had decided that the "Methodist Episcopal Church South," was entitled to a *pro rata* proportion of the property of the Book Concern.

The General Conference for 1860 was held at Buffalo. Bishop Waugh had died Feb. 9, 1858. This Conference referred the question of lay delegation in the Annual Conferences to a popular vote of the members of the church and to the preachers of each Annual Conference.

The Conference decided that it was the duty of a presiding elder to renew the license of a local preacher after a Quarterly Conference had ordered it. Rev. Francis Burns, having been elected by the Liberia Annual Conference, was ordained to the office of missionary bishop. More systematic efforts were adopted at this Conference to obtain the statistics, and advance the interests of all the educational institutions under the patronage of the Methodist-Episcopal Church.

The General Conference of 1864 was held at Philadelphia. Edward Thomson, Davis W Clark, and Calvin Kingsley were elected and ordained bishops. The Conference organized a church-extension society. It also elected a board of trustees to hold in trust all property bequeathed or donated to the church, not specified for any particular object. The time that a preacher might remain on the same circuit was extended from

two to three years. The Conference changed the rule on slavery, virtually prohibiting any member of the church from buying, selling, or holding slaves.

The bishops reported that the question of lay delegation had been submitted to the ministers and members of the church respectively, with the following results: Ministers, in favor of it, 1,338; against it, 3,069. Members, in favor of it, 28,884; against it, 47,885. The Conference resolved that it was ready to admit laymen into the chief councils of the church whenever the church shall indicate its desire for it.

The Home Mission work among the German-American population having become so extensive, and the preachers to this class being mostly those who speak exclusively the German Language, the Conference organized four Annual Conferences for the German work. It also ordered a German hymn-book to be published. Trustees of churches were made members of the Quarterly Conference.

GENERAL STATISTICS OF THE M. E. CHURCH.

The following general statistics of the Methodist-Episcopal Church are taken from the Annual Minutes for 1866:—

Members	871,113
Probationers	161,071
Preachers	7,576
Supernumeraries	408
Superannuated	881
Local Preachers	8,602
Churches	10,462
Probable value of Churches	$29,594,604
Parsonages	3,114
Probable value of Parsonages	$4,420,958

Benevolent Contributions.

For Conference Claimants	$107,892.39
" Missionary Society	671,090.66
" Tract Society	23,349.36
" American Bible Society	107,238.54
" Sunday-school Union	19,850.89

Sunday Schools.

Number of Schools	14,045
Officers and Teachers	162,191
Scholars	980,622
Volumes in Libraries	2,644,291

Institutions of Learning.

Universities and Colleges	25
Seminaries and Female Colleges	77